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The Advent

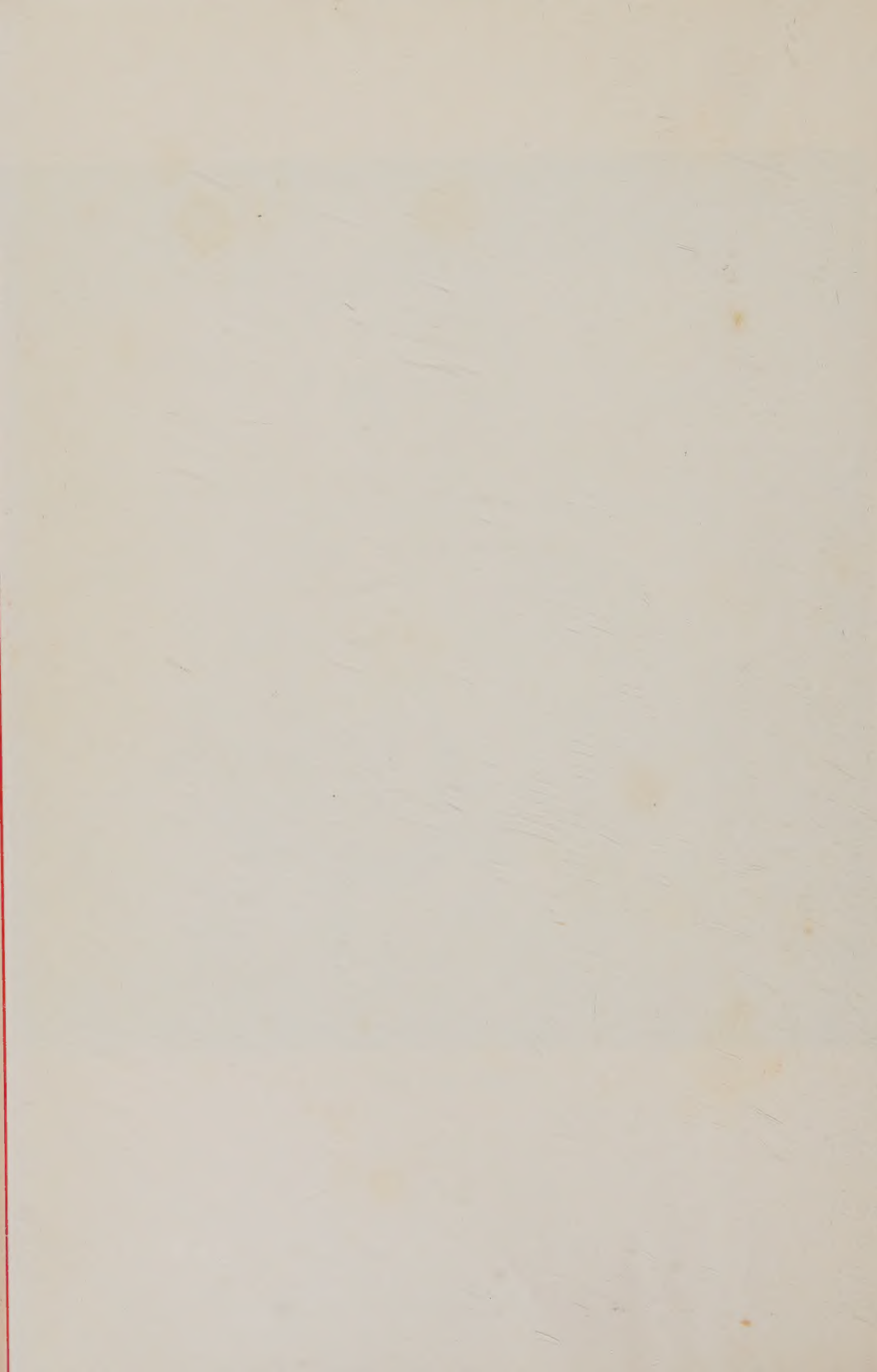


1960

To know is good,
to live is better,
to be, that is perfect.



THE MOTHER



The ADVENT

FEBRUARY, 1960

CONTENTS

	Page
EDITORIALS: THE MOTHER'S COMMENTARY ON SRI AUROBINDO'S <i>Thoughts and Aphorisms</i> (III)	—Nolini Kanta Gupta ... 5
LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO	—Sri Aurobindo ... 10
SRI AUROBINDO LITERATURE (v)	—M. P. Pandit ... 12
SURRENDER	—M. V. Seetaraman ... 18
THE TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER	—Rishabhchand ... 26
SRI AUROBINDO'S <i>Savitri</i>	—Prema Nandakumar ... 42
THE LIFE DIVINE — An Outline	—N. Pearson ... 54
REVIEWS :	
THE INDIAN HERITAGE	—M. P. Pandit ... 62
DISJECTA MEMBRA	—K. D. S. ... 69
PICTORIAL HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY	—M. P. P. ... 73

There should not be one thing too long a time.

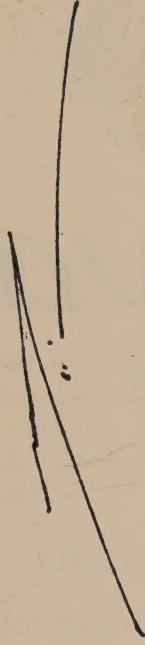
SRI AUROBINDO

des trois crapes de l'union avec le Dieu

Donner tout ce que l'on a, est le point de départ.

Donner tout ce que l'on fait, est le chemin.

Donner tout ce que l'on est, tel est l'aboutissement.

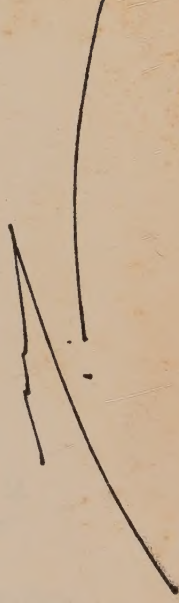


Three steps towards the Supreme Identification

Give all you have, this is the beginning.

Give all you do, this is the way.

Give all you are, this is the fulfilment.





THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

MOTHER'S COMMENTARY

IX

"What the soul sees and has experienced, that it knows, the rest is appearance, prejudice and opinion"

"Thoughts and Aphorisms"—SRI AUROBINDO

THIS comes to saying that all knowledge which is not a result of the soul's knowledge or experience is a knowledge without any true value.

But immediately the question arises, as in effect it has been put to me, "How can one know what the soul sees?"

Evidently, there is only one solution, to become conscious of one's soul, and this completes the aphorism: unless you are conscious of your soul, you cannot have the true knowledge.

Therefore, your first effort should be to find your soul within you, to unite with it and let it govern your life.

Some ask, "how can one know that it is the soul?" I have already answered this question many times. Persons who ask, by the very fact that they ask, prove that they are not conscious of their souls ; for the very moment you are conscious of your soul and identify yourself with it, you know it also and do not ask how to know it. And that experience is not a thing to be simulated or imagined, you cannot pretend to be in contact with your soul. It is a thing you cannot invent or imitate. When the soul governs the life, you know it absolutely, you do not question it.

But the utility of the aphorism we have just read is in making you understand that all that you believe you know, all that you have learnt or that has come to you in the course of your life through personal observations, deductions, comparisons is a very relative knowledge on which you cannot base a system of lasting and truly efficient life.

How often have we not repeated that whatever comes from the mind is quite relative, that the mind, the more it is educated, the more it has followed disciplines, is the more capable of proving that what it puts forward or states is true. By reasoning one can prove the truth of anything and everything, but that does not mean in any way that it is true. It remains as an opinion, a prejudice, a knowledge based upon appearance which is itself more than doubtful.

So it seems there is only one way out: to seek one's soul and to find it. It is there, it is not hiding purposely, it is not playing with you in order to put you into difficulties. On the contrary, it makes a great effort so that you may find it, hear it ; only between it and your active consciousness there are two persons, the vital and the mental, that have a habit of making a great noise. And as they make a great noise and the soul does not do so or does as little as possible, their noise prevents you from hearing its voice.

If you wish to know what your soul knows, you should make

an inner effort ; indeed, if you are attentive, you can, behind this quite external noise of the mind and the vital discern something very subtle, very quiet, very peaceful, which knows and tells what it knows. But the insistence of the others is so imperative and itself it is so quiet that you are easily mistaken ; you hear the one which makes the greatest noise and most often you do not perceive that it was the other one which was right. That thing does not insist, does not force you to hear, because it does not know violence.

When you hesitate, when you ask what you have got to do in certain circumstances, there is desire, at once a mental and vital preference which insists and, with all the best reasons in the world, goes on arguing, and if you are not on your guard, if you do not possess a strong self-discipline, if you are not accustomed to self-control, that finishes by convincing you in the end that it was in the right, and as I just told you, it makes such a noise that you do not even hear the still small voice, the still small indication of the soul which says, "Do not do it".

This "do not do it" comes often, and you brush it aside as a thing having no force and you follow the destiny of your impulse. But if you are truly sincere in your will to find the truth and to live it, then you have to learn how to discern it more and more, and even if it costs you some effort, even if it brings you pain, you learn how to obey it. And even if you have obeyed only once, it becomes a powerful help, a considerable progress on your way to distinguishing what is the soul and what it is not and by this discrimination and the necessary sincerity you are sure to reach the goal.

But you must not be in a haste, you must not be impatient, you must be very persevering. For one thing you do correctly, you make mistakes ten times ; but when you make a mistake you should not give up and despair, you must tell yourself that the Grace never abandons you and that it will be better the next time.

Therefore, in conclusion, we shall say that to know things as they are, you must unite with your soul and in order to unite

with your soul you must will it with persistence and perseverance.

The degree of concentration upon the goal can alone shorten the length of the way.

X

“My soul knows that it is immortal. But you take a dead body to pieces and cry triumphantly, “Where is your soul and where is your immortality ?”

It has been very often repeated, but apart from some exceptions, very few have understood that it is only the similar that can know the similar. If that were understood, much ignorance would vanish.

The soul alone knows the soul and, on each level of the soul, only the equivalent recognizes the equivalent. Only the Divine can know the Divine. And it is because we carry the Divine in ourselves that we are able to see Him and recognize Him. But if we try to understand anything of the inner life by means of our senses and external processes, we are sure to end in a total failure and in a total blunder.

Therefore if you imagine that you can know the secrets of Nature while remaining in a purely physical consciousness, you are wholly mistaken. And this habit of demanding concrete and material proofs before one accepts the reality of something is one of the most evident results of ignorance. With that attitude the silliest person imagines that he can judge of the highest things and that he has disproved the deepest experiences.

Certainly it is not by dissecting the body which is dead, because the soul has gone out of it, that you can find the soul. If the soul had not gone away, the body would not be dead. It is in order to point out the absurdity of this claim that Sri Aurobindo wrote the aphorism.

It is applicable to all judgments of the critical human mind

and to all scientific methods when they want to judge other than purely material things.

The conclusion is always the same : the only true attitude is an attitude of humility, of silent respect before what one does not know and that of an inner aspiration for coming out of one's ignorance. This is one of the things that most helps humanity to progress : to respect what it does not know, to recognize of its own accord, that it does not know and therefore it cannot judge. But always the contrary is done. You pronounce final judgments on things you do not know at all, you say with an authoritative air : "That is possible, this is impossible", even when you do not know what it is all about. You take a superior air because you doubt things you never knew.

People believe that to doubt is a sign of superiority, but really it is a sign of inferiority.

Scepticism and doubt are two of the greatest obstacles to progress. They add presumption to ignorance.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

LETTERS OF SRĪ AUROBINDO

IT does not mean that Maya is Brahman's freedom, but "doctrine of Maya simply comes to this that Brahman is free from the circumstances through which he expresses himself". This limited play is not He, for He is illimitable ; it is only a conditioned (partial) manifestation, but He is not bound by the conditions (circumstances) as the play is bound. The world is a figure of something of Himself which he has put forth into it, but He is more than that figure. The world is not unreal or illusory, but our present seeing or consciousness of it is ignorance, and therefore the world *as seen by us* can be described as an illusion. So far the Maya idea is true. But if we see the world as it really is, a partial and developing manifestation of Brahman, then it can no longer be described as an illusion, but rather as a Lila. He is still more than his Lila, but He is in it and it is in Him ; it is not an illusion.

16-10-1931

*
**

(Should not the War idea in the Gita be now interpreted as an inner war of the seeker of God against the inner enemies obstructing his path ?)

Yes.

But note that the Gita was *not* meant by the writer to be an allegory—you can say, if you like, that now we should dismiss the ancient war element by interpreting it as if it were an allegory. The Gita is Yoga, spiritual truth applied to external life and action—but it may be *any* action and not necessarily an

action *resembling* that of the Gita. The *principle* of the spiritual consciousness applied to action has to be kept—the particular example used by the Gita may be treated as a thing belonging to a past world.

*
**

The Asuras and Rakshasas etc. do not belong to the earth, but to supraphysical worlds ; but they act upon the earth life and dispute the control of human life and character and action with the Gods. They are the Powers of Darkness combating the Powers of Light.

Sometimes they possess men in order to act through them, sometimes they take birth in a human body. When their use in the play is over, they will either change or disappear or no longer seek to intervene in the earth-play.

*
**

Shuddha Dharma Gita

The whole thing (I mean the additions) is a sheer invention by someone who had a great facility in writing Sanskrit verse not of the best quality—whether that person was himself under a delusion, I cannot say—but in any case the thing is without any value.

*
**

The cobra is a symbol of the Energy in Nature—the up-raised hood and light indicate the illumination and victorious position of the emerged Energy.

*
**

(The figure AUM surrounded by light)

It is a symbol of the Purusha Consciousness.

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO LITERATURE (V)

The Letters

OF all the writings of Sri Aurobindo the most important from the standpoint of *sadhana*, practice of yoga, are his Letters. His correspondence covers a large variety of subjects : Yoga, Philosophy, Literature, Art, Occultism, Astrology, Sociology, International affairs etc. etc. Aspirants for spiritual life, practitioners of his Yoga within the Ashram and outside, put their difficulties and doubts before him and sought for guidance and help. Experiences, visions, dreams were submitted for interpretation. Learned men and professional philosophers posed searching queries on fine points in the metaphysics of his gospel of the Life Divine. Disciples who found poetic inspiration welling up in them in the course of the Yoga sent up their efforts for his scrutiny. At times even mundane matters and opinions of men in public life were placed before him for comment. And so it went on. He used to deal with most of the letters himself, meticulously, and for a considerable number of years it took a good many hours daily¹ to deal with all this volume of correspondence. At its peak there were more than a hundred letters every day. Many of his letters in reply were later compiled, either in full or in extracts, under suitable titles and issued in book-form from time to time.² Recently a comprehensive col-

¹ Vide Sri Aurobindo's own remarks in this connection :

"The volume of correspondence is becoming enormous and it takes me all the night and a good part of the day—apart from the work done separately by the Mother who has also to work the greater part of the night in addition to her day's work."

"I have to spend twelve hours over the ordinary correspondence, numerous reports etc. I work three hours in the afternoon and the whole night up to six in the morning over this." (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother*, Pp. 399 & 266)

² *The Riddle of this world, Lights on Yoga, Bases of Yoga, More Lights on Yoga, Elements of Yoga, Letters (First, Second, Third, and Fourth Series), Life-Literature-Yoga, Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo* (by Nirodbaran), I & II series.

lection of his letters dealing with Yoga has been brought out in the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education Series.¹ And it is with the letters on Yoga that we are concerned in our present series.

Most of these letters were written to sadhaks of the Integral Yoga, in response to their queries and seekings for guidance. Developments and difficulties in the day-to-day course of the sadhana were placed before the Guru by the disciples and he wrote to them explaining, clarifying things, and what is more, he used such occasions to communicate his special help, through the medium of the written word and otherwise, in order to meet the situation and speed up the progress. And these communications were a source of inspiration and helpful pointers on the Path to others as well. As he himself says :

“If I have given importance to the correspondence, it is because it was an effective instrument towards my central purpose—there are a large number of sadhaks whom it has helped to awaken from lethargy and begin to tread the way of spiritual experience, others whom it has carried from a small round of experience to a flood of realisations, some who have been absolutely hopeless for years who have undergone a conversion and entered from darkness into an opening of light...for the majority of those who wrote there has been real progress. No doubt also it was not the correspondence in itself but the Force that was increasing in its pressure on the physical nature which was able to do all this, but a canalisation was needed, and this served the purpose.”²

It is not necessary to add that the letters were not answers to questions in the usual intellectual way but ‘answers from higher spiritual experience, from a deeper source of knowledge and not

¹ *On Yoga*, Vol. II, Tomes 1 & 2.

This is, naturally, not yet exhaustive; letters are still being collected and edited. They are being published, as they get ready, in some of the periodicals of the Ashram, viz. *The Advent*, *Mother India*, Annual Numbers of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, Bombay.

² *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 258

lucubrations of the logical intellect trying to coordinate its ignorance'.¹ In them we see Sri Aurobindo not in the role of the Prophet of the high Philosophy of the Life Divine, nor even as the High Priest ushering in a New Age by means of a Poorna Yoga holding in itself all the essentials of the past spiritual effort of humanity and forging a new Dynamism, but as the Master with a supreme understanding of human nature with its countless foibles, with an endless compassion for its cry for help, ever ready to support, guide, and lead the seeker with an infinite patience along the steep path of Yoga. Nothing is too small, nothing too profane to claim his attention. His Yoga touches life at every point and no part of it could be outside his scope. In result, we have in these Letters a most comprehensive body of practical knowledge invaluable not only for those living an inner life of the spirit but equally a reliable guide for a better, harmonious and enlightened conduct of the general life.

II

Though it is true that each individual has his own life of spiritual growth and what is valid for one need not be so for another, yet there are certain fundamental truths which are common to all types of sadhana. And this is particularly true in the case of sadhaks of the same Yoga. Whatever the individual variations in the experience of the Yoga-process, the broad governing Truth is the same. It is with this background that we have to approach the Letters of Sri Aurobindo for a helpful study of his Yoga.

OBJECT OF INTEGRAL YOGA

To begin with, what is the object of the Integral Yoga developed by Sri Aurobindo ?

The object is, first, to grow from the normal limited human consciousness into a higher, wider Divine Consciousness.

¹ *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*, p. 261

Next, this Divine Consciousness with all that it contains,—the Peace, Light, Joy, Knowledge, is to be progressively brought into a direct functioning in our external nature in order to totally change that nature into its own higher illumined term, the Super-nature.

The purpose of this transformation is to manifest the Divine in our life. And of this manifestation our personal liberation is a part—only a part, though an indispensable one. This manifestation of the Divine in our life implies a realisation in and a sequent radiation of the Divine Consciousness not from the soul alone but equally from all the different parts of the being. What is aimed at is a complete union with the Divine on all the planes of one's being. The mind, the life, the body, the soul, all must be equally filled with the Divine Presence and be effective centres for the outpouring of the Divine Power in the universe.

Or, to put it differently, the Integral Yoga has three clear objects in view :

First, the realisation of the Divine within oneself—the individual realisation.

Next, a felt seeing of the One Divine all around in the universe, the Divine which is identical with one's own Self—the cosmic realisation.

And third, an ascension into an order of the Reality which stands above both the individual and the universal manifestation, but basing them both—the realisation of the transcendent Divine.

Each of these realisations must be attained and integrated within one's being so as to be simultaneously active and the miracle of the triple manifestation of God¹ is repeated in every individual frame: each man grows into his godhead.

It may be asked what is the special feature and necessity of this Yoga. After all God is One and there are a thousand paths to reach Him. What does it matter which path you take ? What is important is that you reach Him by whatever path.

DISTINCTION FROM OTHER PATHS

Generally speaking the goal of all the paths of Yoga is *Mukti*, liberation. The world is a transient phenomenon, or an illusion; if it is not totally an illusion, it is definitely an inferior order of existence.¹ Limitation, incapacity and death are its badge. The one aim of the awakened man must be to get out of this round of pain and pleasure, life and death and effect a release into a blissful or an ineffable Beyond, call it Brahman, call it Nirvana. But in Sri Aurobindo's Teaching the Universe is as real as the Divine of which it is a willed Emanation. It is not a falsity imposed upon the Truth of Brahman. Nor is it something inferior. It is a self-formulation, *as yet imperfect*, of the manifesting Godhead. And the sole object of the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is to complete this outflowing of the Divine Consciousness on earth. It aims at a fulfilment of the Divine Intention, first in the life of the individual and then in the life of the collectivity. It gives a meaning to the life on earth which is not a whit less significant—perhaps it is more—than life in the heavens in the scheme of Creation.

Aiming as they do to reject life in this apparently transitory and unhappy world, the other yogas generally seek to realise the Self, the Atman, behind or above the mind-led life of the body, and through it disappear into the Vast Impersonality of the Great Self or into Nirvana, extinction. That is to say, the way is one of withdrawal from the line of manifestation of which this earth forms a crucial part. The Integral Yoga on the other hand, keeps to the evolutionary line of ascent in the Manifestation. The self within is to be realised; but that is only the first step. After attaining to union with this self, one has to effect an enlargement of the consciousness to arrive at an identity with the larger Self, the Universal Atman and embrace the totality of Existence supported by It. This is further followed by an ascension into the dynamics of the Divine Knowledge, Power, Bliss—an aspect which reveals itself to the seeker beyond the summits of the

¹ Or, in conceptions like the Christian, life on earth is only a preparatory stage to an eternal existence elsewhere—heaven or hell—after death.

spiritualised mind, on the planes of the Super-mind. And it is these verities of the Divine Existence that justify human aspiration for perfection of life on earth. It is they that shall bring into overt expression the full Nature of the Divine, hitherto at the back of manifestation, and confirm and complete the movement for the revelation of the Divine Truth in human life.

The aim is different; the direction is different. The process too is different in important ways of detail. For instance, in the other yogas one is not called upon to subject one's nature to a transmuting change. It is enough if the nature is silenced or modified enough to prevent its being a drag or a block to the inner progress of the soul godward. Even after the realisation is achieved, no special attention is paid to the outer nature. It goes on in its mechanical round carried on the impetus of past Karma and drops away at death leaving the soul completely free. But not so in this yoga. Each part of the nature, submissive or recalcitrant, has to change; it has to leave its moorings in ignorance and allow itself to be recast into its higher potential. The whole of the external nature, including the physical body, must be made supple and pure enough to hold and respond spontaneously to the Divine Consciousness housed in it.

Again, in this yoga, there is no suppression or stoppage of the flow of life energies or the legitimate activity of the senses. They continue to function in full but in an enlightened spirit imbued with the growing Light, Power, Delight of the Divine Truth. Not asceticism but a radiant plenitude of life is the Way. In the ways of the Vedanta to attain union with the Divine in the inner Purusha is enough; in those of the Tantra, what is required is an effective identification with the Shakti, individual and cosmic, and that gives the release. But here both are combined. The Realisation in the consciousness of the Purusha has to spread to the Prakriti. The Purusha regains his mastery over Prakriti and both together lift their human embodiment to an altogether new altitude in the scale of human Evolution.

M. P. PANDIT

SURRENDER*

I

SPIRITUAL Adepts and Gnostics from time immemorial have always declared that the Supreme Divine who is Transcendent extends in and interpenetrates the Universe and indwells the individual created beings with His Peace, Power, Light, Beauty and Ananda. "For who could live or breathe if there were not this delight of existence as the ether in which we dwell ? From delight all these beings are born, by Delight they exist and grow, to Delight they return," says the Taittiriya Upanishad.¹ "It is He that has gone abroad—That which is bright, bodiless, without scar of imperfection, without sinews, pure, unpierced by evil. The Seer, the Thinker, the One who becomes everywhere, the Self-existent has ordered objects perfectly according to their nature from years sempiternal," says the Isha.² This triple world of mind, life and body rooted in Ignorance and Inconscience is apparelled in celestial light and 'literally bathing in an atmosphere of all the divine things, constantly in their full intensity' but is not aware of it. To heal the gulf between these two poles of existence—the Superconscient of the Upper Hemisphere and the Inconscient of the Lower Hemisphere—Love was born in this universe. In the words of the Mother, "The manifestation of the love of the Divine in the world was the great holocaust, the supreme self-giving. The Perfect Consciousness accepted to be merged and absorbed into the unconsciousness of matter, so that consciousness might be awakened in the depths of its obscurity and little by little a Divine Power might rise in it and make the whole of this manifested universe

* Sri Aurobindo's sonnet included in *Last Poems*

a highest expression of the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Love. This was the supreme love, to accept the loss of the perfect condition of supreme divinity, its absolute consciousness, its infinite knowledge, to unite with unconsciousness, to dwell in the world with ignorance and darkness. And yet none perhaps would call it love; for it does not clothe itself in a superficial sentiment, it makes no demand in exchange for what it has done, no show of its sacrifice. The force of love in the world is trying to find consciousnesses that are capable of receiving this divine movement in its purity and expressing it. This race of all beings towards love, this irresistible push and seeking out in the world's heart and in all hearts, is the impulse given by a Divine Love behind the human longing and seeking. It touches millions of instruments, trying always, always failing; but this constant touch prepares these instruments and suddenly one day there will awake in them the capacity of self-giving, the capacity of loving."³ Human beings are imprisoned in the shells of their Egòs though floating indeed in the Ocean of the Divine Consciousness. But the waves of this Ocean toss these shells and dash against them and in the process a refinement takes place in some parts of these shells. The individual then gets a glimpse of the Infinite and starts on the road to conscious union with it. He spiritualises one or other of the different parts of his complex personality,—mind, heart or will—learns to live exclusively in this part by dissociating himself from the rest of his being and enjoys union with the Divine in that part or jumps and plunges into the Ocean with that part as a spring board. Rare indeed is the man who will not be contented with this partial union but would aspire for a complete union with the Lord in all the parts of his being. Rarer still is the hero-warrior who is not satisfied with even this complete union in any plane beyond but yearns to become a vehicle for the divine work of transformation of the triple world in the image of the Supramental. Sri Aurobindo's sonnet on 'Surrender' hymns this complete consecration aspiring for an integral union and integral transformation.

II

The poem begins with an invocation to the Lord and Master of Yoga, Yogeshwara, and voices the intense aspiration for a complete identity of consciousness :

O Thou of whom I am the instrument,
 O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,
 Let all my mortal being now be blent
 In Thy still glory of divinity.

In the state of complete consecration, the Sadhaka has reached a stage of very close intimacy with the Divine when he feels himself as the instrument of the Lord for he is now in the supreme state of the Yoga of Devotion. As Sri Aurobindo explains :

Three are the words that sum up the first state of the Yoga of Devotion : faith, worship, obedience.

Three are the words that sum up the second state of the Yoga of Devotion : adoration, delight, self-giving.

Three are the words that sum up the supreme state of the Yoga of Devotion : love, ecstasy, surrender.⁴

And again in the *Synthesis of Yoga*, "He (The Lord) is the Master; but in this way of approach all distance and separation, all awe and fear and mere obedience disappear, because we become too close and united with him for these things to endure and it is the lover of our being who takes it up and occupies and uses and does with it whatever he wills. Obedience is the sign of the servant, but that is the lowest stage of this relation, *dāsya*. Afterwards we do not obey, but move to his will as the string replies to the finger of the musician. To be the instrument is this higher stage of self-surrender and submission. But this is the living and loving instrument and it ends in the whole nature

of our being, becoming the slave of God, rejoicing in his possession and its own blissful subjection to the divine grasp and mastery. With a passionate delight it does all he wills it to do without questioning and bears all he would have it bear, because what it bears is the burden of the beloved being.”⁵

This nearness has naturally revealed the secret nature of the Lord who is at once the secret Spirit and Nature. He is at the same time Purushottama and Paraprakriti—‘One who is Two and becomes the Two who become the Many’. “This is the supreme Nature of the Divine which is the real source of cosmic existence and its fundamental creative force and effective energy and of which the other lower and ignorant nature is only a derivation and a dark shadow. In this highest dynamis Purusha and Prakriti are one. Prakriti there, is only the will and the executive power of the Purusha, his activity of being,—not a separate entity but himself in Power. It is the integral conscious-power of the supreme Being, Chit-Shakti, which is behind the self and cosmos. All this activity of forms, all this mental, sensuous, intelligent striving of the lower nature is only a phenomenon, which could not be at all except for this spiritual force and this power of being ; it comes from that and it exists in that and by that solely.”⁶ He is Krishna who is Kali ; Shiva who is Shakti and the sadhaka realises that in them lies his self-fulfilment in soul and nature. All that his nature aspires for—Truth, Light, Power, Beauty, Love and Delight—are there in all their plenitude but yet in a state of absolute fusion with an imperturbable and unfathomable Peace—‘still glory of divinity’. The drop is face to face with the Vast Ocean and does not foolishly resist it but quietly wishes for an immergence in it and finds its true self by giving itself completely :

I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,

I have offered up my will to be Thy will :

Let nothing of myself be left behind

In our union mystic and unutterable.

The self-giving is spontaneous indeed but the mind is such a

hard and deep region of resistances that the work of purification for the Divine Shakti is very much like digging a channel. For "There are obstinate difficulties in our being born of its evolutionary constitution which militates against this assent. For some of these parts are still subject to the inconscience and subconscience and to the lower automatism of habit or so-called law of the nature,—mechanical habit of mind, habit of life, habit of instinct, habit of personality, habit of character, the ingrained mental, vital, physical needs, impulses, desires of the natural man, the old functionings of all kinds that are rooted there so deep that it would seem as if we had to dig to abysmal foundations in order to get them out : these parts refuse to give up their response to the lower law founded in the Inconscient ; they continually send up to the conscious mind and life the old reactions and seek to reaffirm them there as the eternal rule of Nature. Other parts of the being are less obscure and mechanical and rooted in the inconscience, but all are imperfect and attached to their imperfection and have their own obstinate reactions ; the vital part is wedded to the law of self-affirmation and desire, the mind is attached to its own formed movements, and both are willingly obedient to the inferior law of the Ignorance."⁷ Only the Divine Shakti and Her Grace can deal with the mind and will imprisoned in life and matter and shape them for the union. But here is the assent of the conscious being of the Sadhaka to the action of the higher power of its change. In fact the assent is total and complete and there is absolute plasticity, for the union sought for is integral and hence the devout supplication :

Let nothing of myself be left behind

In our union mystic and unutterable.

The union is essentially spiritual in its nature and therefore beyond the ken of the established faculties of the human kind—senses, heart, imagination and mind. Human language fashioned to express the experiences of these established faculties in their areas and fields of experience can never utter these sublime

ecstasies. "It (Love-union) includes all kinds of mukti together, nor are they in the end, as some would have it, merely successive to each other and therefore mutually exclusive. We have the absolute union of the divine with the human spirit, *sāyujya* ; in that reveals itself a content of all that depends here upon difference,—but there the difference is only a form of oneness,—ananda too of nearness and contact and mutual presence, *sāmīpya*, *sālokyā*, ananda of mutual reflection, the thing that we call likeness, *sādṛśya*, and other wonderful things too for which language has as yet no name. There is nothing which is beyond the reach of the God-lover or denied to him ; for he is the favourite of the divine Lover and the self of the Beloved."⁸

As we advance in the poem from line to line the aspiration for union and identity increases in intensity and the deepest secrets of the Mighty Lover and His Will in this world, the logic in the magic of his manifestation stand self-revealed and the future is already visualised with extraordinary vividness. For the Transcendent has willed to transform this mind, life and body with His Supramental Shakti and establish a divine life in a divine body. Love was born only for this grand purpose and consummation. "With the Divine's Love is the power of Transformation. It has this power because it is for the sake of Transformation that it has given itself to the world and manifested everywhere. Not only into man but into all the atoms of Matter has it infused itself in order to bring the world back to the original Truth. The moment you open to it, you receive also its power of Transformation."⁹ In fact, the very process and result of Transformation are the play of the Infinite on the finite, of the Divine on the human in a ravishing embrace. A divine life in the manifestation is the utmost fulfilment of Love. And so we have the declaration in absolute certitude and ecstasy of union of the transformed state :

My heart shall throb with the world-beats of Thy love ;
 My body become Thy engine for earth-use ;
 In my nerves and veins Thy rapture's streams shall move ;

My thoughts shall be hounds of Light for Thy power to loose. The heart feels the all-embracing cosmic Love of the Lord, the body becomes His happy tool, the vital-physical feels the divine Ananda and the mind becomes a playground for the intuitivised thoughts and Lightning Truth-visions from above. In the untransformed state the mind was the parent of division and the lawyer of the vital with its subconscious moorings. Now it becomes not only full of the truth-light but also a faithful instrument for the Supramental Ishwari Shakti to fight the enemies of the Light in their very dens and caves of Darkness. The thoughts are hounds to be unleashed and controlled by the Divine power. We are naturally reminded of the Vedic Hound of Heaven, Sarama, of whom Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Secret of the Veda*, "Sarama brings us to the truth, to the sun-vision which is the way to the bliss ; these dogs bring the weal to man in this world of suffering so that he shall have the vision of the Sun. Whether Sarama figures as the fair-footed goddess speeding on the path or the heavenly hound, mother of these wide-ranging guardians of the path, the idea is the same, a power of the Truth that seeks and discovers, that finds by a divine faculty of insight the hidden Light and the denied Immortality."¹⁰ But the best explanation of these lines is in Sri Aurobindo's poem on Transformation :

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream ;
 It fills my members with a might divine :
 I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.
 Time is my drama or my pageant dream.
 Now are my illumined cells Joy's flaming scheme
 And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine
 Channels of rapture opal and hyaline
 For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.
 I am no more a vassal of the flesh,
 A slave to Nature and her leaden rule ;
 I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.
 My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,

My body is God's happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.¹¹

But the greatest delight in the relationship with the Beloved is to retain one's separate individual centre after realising one's identity with Him so that the joy of union might be all the more intense. The One has become the Many for this very purpose of tasting the joy of mutual and collective union among the multitudinous centres and forms of the manifestation. For Vasudeva is the soul and form of all these becomings in the world and to meet Him in every form and contact and worship Him in every soul and as the All-soul are the lofty consummation of love and the supreme ecstasy for the God-lover and God-knower.

"And what is the end of the whole matter? As if honey could taste itself and all its drops together and all its drops could taste each other and each the whole honeycomb as itself, so should the end be with God and the soul of man and the universe."¹²

So the sonnet ends with the ardent prayer :

Keep only my soul to adore eternally
And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee.

M. V. SEETARAMAN

1. *Taittiriya Upanishad — Brahmananda Valli — Ch.7; Bhṛigu valli — Ch.6*
2. *Isha Upanishad — Verse.8.*
3. *Words of The Mother — Part First — Sec.9 (Pages 107-8)*
4. *Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education — Vol. II — No.3 — (Page 113)*
5. *The Synthesis of Yoga — Part Three — Ch.8 — (Page 688 in the International Centre edition).*
6. *Essays on the Gita — Book Two — Part One — Sec. 1 (Page 237 in the American Edition)*
7. *The Life Divine — Vol.2 — Part 2. — Chapter XXVI (Page 1105 in The International Centre edition)*
8. *Synthesis of Yoga — Part Three — Chapter 8 — (Page 690 in the International Centre edition)*
9. *Words of The Mother — Part Two — (Page 188)*
10. *The Secret of the Veda — Ch. 20 — (Page 254 in the International Centre edition)*
11. *Collective Poems : Vol. II (Page 297)*
12. *Thoughts and Glimpses (Pages 17-18)*

THE TEACHINGS OF THE MOTHER

EDUCATION

VI

PESTALOZZI¹

PESTALOZZI (1746-1821), a Swiss, was one of the most influential educationists of the modern times. He called the attention of the academic world to the value and right methods of popular education. He advocated a simultaneous and harmonious development of the head, heart and hand of the child, so that the child may grow into a whole man. He believed, like Rousseau, from whom he imbibed much that is vital to his system, that the powers and capacities of the child develop best in a free and natural way, and that the less interference or imposition from outside the better. The child grows, like the plant, spontaneously, if the right atmosphere and the right conditions are judiciously provided. Education, according to Pestalozzi, is the bringing out of the innate powers and qualities of the child, for, "He is not a man whose inner powers are undeveloped."

"The nature of the child must determine the details of his education." Help should be given to a child only when it is in need of it. "Let the child use his chalk or pencil freely, assisted or occasionally stimulated by his teacher, but do not force him into directions which do not appeal to him. He will finally become sensitive of the need for greater accuracy. At that moment mechanical training may properly begin." Undue interference may kill spontaneity.

¹ I am indebted to *The Year Book of Education*, 1957, and Percival Cole's *History of Educational Thought* for much of the matter incorporated here.

Pestalozzi's system of education is based on an intelligent and patient training of sense-perception. Observation, experiment, and self-expression are an essential method of learning. Pestalozzi, like Plato, set great store by the power of music and the arts to cultivate the finer sensibilities of the child. He regarded music to be a great means of moral and religious education. In his system, "workshop activities are not separated from, nor do they simply run parallel to, academic studies; both are interwoven as integral parts of the regular class work and supplement each other."

The Pestalozzi Children's village was founded in 1946 with the object of giving shelter and education to the poor war orphans of the different nationalities of the West. Switzerland, which has been spared the horrors of the world wars, was rightly deemed an ideal place for such a noble venture. Young children of different nationalities, speaking different languages, and sprung from different cultures, were provided with a place where they could forget the anguish of being destitute orphans, and live in peace and happiness, loved and cared for, and educated in such a way as to be able to live the life of a small international family, co-operating with their fellow-students of various nationalities in study, work and play.

The Pestalozzi Village in Zurich has inspired similar villages in other countries. The Pestalozzi Children's Village in London, which has been doing excellent work, is "planning an international Village on the same lines". The idea behind the Pestalozzi Village is to create "a genuine family life on an uncommonly broad basis," and, by the co-existence of both the sexes, the fostering of the spirit of international friendship, and the development of a sense of joy in community life, establish order and harmony in an atmosphere of integrated education and self-imposed discipline and responsibility. That the idea has a ready appeal in the war-torn world of today goes without saying. Margot Hicklin, who has made a thorough study of the life of the Village, says : "...It is surprising how fortunate

the Village has been in the choice of its co-workers. It is even more astonishing and at the same time inspiring to see to what extent the humblest as well the most important member of the staff feels identified with the work of the Village. Administrator or carpenter, teacher or postman, cook or artist : there is not one of them who does not put the good of the Community before his own interest many times a day without a moment's hesitation." A Finnish house-father of the Village once remarked about his group : "The family life of our Finnish boys, in combination with community life and good comradeship with children of other nations in the Village, has deepened the good traits in our national character. The children remain individuals but have acquired a new sense of belonging together."

So far as they go, these Pestalozzi Villages have proved successful. Students learn there to live and study and work together, forgetting the normal barriers of nationality, language and social status. But we cannot say that the cardinal ideas of Pestalozzi have come anywhere near realisation. In fact, they have not even been properly grasped. The very start, made under abnormal war conditions, and with a growing batch of war orphans, imposed certain unavoidable restrictions, and precluded a proper pursuit of the Pestalozzi ideal. A happy and harmonious community life, international friendship, the problem of peace etc., which are more or less, social and contingent factors, thrown up by the war, went into the formation of the originating idea of the Swiss Village, and were somehow squared with the basic principles of Pestalozzi's system. The result was a clumsy compromise, though, from the outer and superficial standpoint, it has been quite gratifying.

The first principle of Pestalozzi's system—that "he is not a man whose inner powers have not developed"—has not been understood by his disciples. The inner powers are not the surface moral capacities for friendship and fellowship, organisation and team-work, and self-adaptation and tolerance, though, these are, no doubt, inestimable in their proper place, and indispen-

sable to the building of the child's character. The inner powers which Pestalozzi had in view are the spiritual powers, developing from the depths of our being. But Pestalozzi himself, it must be admitted, had no very clear conception of what these powers actually are. He had only a faint intuitive perception of them.

The second principle—that “the nature of the child must determine all the details of his education”—could not, quite understandably, be worked out in the excited atmosphere of the post-war days. And, besides, neither modern pedagogy nor scientific psychology has any means at its disposal for the study of the innate nature of the child. The surface likes and dislikes, capacities and incapacities of the child are no sure index to its real nature, its *swabhāva*, which can be known only by a deeper intuitive insight, not yet accessible to the fumbling empiricism of modern psychology.

The third principle—that moral education consists in “subordinating the demands of our intellectual and practical capacities to the higher demands of morality and religion”—has been reduced to an observance of Christian rites and customs with an emphasis on “truly Christian outlook and behaviour.” Evidently, the Pestalozzi Village is not to blame for it; for, it is difficult for the modern mind in the West to conceive of religion otherwise than as a set of rites and rituals, and a particular type of outlook and behaviour.

The high, creative principles of Pestalozzi's system of education were thus diluted and distorted in the modifications it underwent at the hands of his disciples and others. What was ancillary and subsidiary was made to take the first place, and the main things were lost in the wilderness of practical details. This is a besetting tragedy of all idealistic endeavours in the West—the settled preference and avidity for immediate material results stultify the spontaneous realisation of the ideal. It is a tyranny of Matter over the mind and soul of man. The concrete and the contingent are suffered to dictate terms to the essential and the fundamental. The technique strangles the spirit, the machine

sterilises the creative genius of man.

As Percival R. Cole rightly observes : "The system of Pestalozzi suffered from the unintelligent and mechanical applications of others, and from its own inconsistencies and imperfections." Pestalozzi could not, indeed, render the message of his visions and inspirations into coherent and consistent intellectual terms. He left his system rather vague and imperfect. He lacked a steady spiritual vision, which alone could have given his system psychological depth and organic unity. But whatever that may be, it cannot be denied that he exerted a great influence on the elementary education of the West.

KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

Friedrich Froebel, born in Germany in 1782, can be said to be the father of the kindergarten system. After studying forestry, accountancy and architecture, he took up appointment as a teacher in a Pestalozzian school at Frankfurt. He observed the work of Pestalozzi at close quarters, and was much impressed by it. He founded the Universal German Educational Institute in 1817, and a school in 1837; but the name Kindergarten, which came to him as a revelation, was adopted only in 1840. Among his books, mention may be made of *Education of Man*, and *Autobiographical Letter to the Duke of Meiningen*. So far as Froebel's views on education are concerned, it can be said that they represent perhaps the best and most comprehensive ideal ever conceived in the West in the modern times. But the very depth and sweep of his ideal have stood in the way of its being popular, in the same way as the depth and sweep of Whitehead's philosophy have rendered it unintelligible to the narrow, analytical mind of modern man. Froebel is dismissed as being too idealistic, too utopian, to be taken seriously in the matter of practical education. But something of his practical method was acclaimed as a great discovery, and has inaugurated a new era in the history of education.

I shall first give a concise account of the fundamental philosophy and metaphysic of Froebel's system of education, so that the reader may get an idea of its bedrock principles. The Indian reader will be particularly struck by the resemblance they bear to the philosophy of India.

Froebel believed that Spirit is the sole, all-embracing Reality, and that there is one indivisible substance in God, man and Nature. There is a triple unity in existence: unity of substance, since all that is is Spirit; unity of origin, since everything is derived from the divine Mind; and unity of purpose, since there is a teleology or progressive purpose in creation, and everything "strives towards a divinely-ordained perfection." The universe is not an aggregate or conglomeration, but a living and developing organism, animated and guided by the breath of Spirit. Not only living beings and things, but even what is regarded as inanimate nature, Froebel believed, is instinct with Spirit, and is an integral part of the universal organism. Life is not a mechanical process, but a development or evolution according to the Laws of Spirit.

The child, according to Froebel, is not a mere biological entity, but houses within it a spark of Spirit, which it is its destiny to develop "until it transforms and elevates the whole range of human nature." The child must be led with prescient love and care to discover and realise the divine spark, and co-operate with the divine Will in it. The world "will not come to an end until man has achieved human perfection." It is man's paramount duty to discover the real meaning of his life, and live it.

It is evident that Froebel was essentially spiritual in his faith and outlook, and that his system of education was a natural outcome of his faith. He believed in the eternal and infinite Reality, and the unity and purposiveness of Its universal existence. There is a Will behind everything that happens in the world, and what is considered as chance or accident is nothing but a veiled decree of Providence. And union with this Will is the secret of a meaningful development and perfection in life. The education of the child must be grounded in and inspired by this spiritual faith

and knowledge, and no outer facts and factors of life must be allowed to deflect it from the right course.

The main principles of education derived from this spiritual outlook are :

1) The teacher must set about his work, fully conscious of the fact that he is entrusted with the development of a living spark of the Divine, and not with that of a mere biological or intellectual being. 2) The instincts of the child are the first material the teacher has to work upon. 3) The innate nature of the child must be given full freedom to develop along its own line of evolution, care being taken only to guard it against external attacks and pitfalls. 4) There should be an intimate relationship between the child and nature. "Children should be led to Nature as to the house of God." Nature, approached with wonder and adoring love, and studied in all its unified diversity, conducts the soul of the child to the Source and Sustenance of all things. It helps to generate harmony in the nature of the child. 5) The mind of the child is not a blank sheet or a clean slate. It has its own impulses, its own reachings out towards knowledge—it is self-active. It has its own individuality, and is likely to resent and defy all attempts on the part of the teacher to mould it after his cherished patterns. The child is born with certain powers and possibilities, which are its spiritual endowment and have to be developed with loving care and vigilance. Its mind must be directed along the lines of its natural inclinations, and not burdened with the super-cargo of other's ideas. Development, not instruction, was the watchword of Froebel's system of education.

Froebel's views on play are original, and deserve careful study by all modern educationists. But, I am afraid, they are not likely to find favour with those who do not share his spiritual outlook. It is small wonder that they have not been adopted in their original form in the kindergarten system, which developed after his death.

Froebel defines play as "a self-active representation of the inner life from inner necessity and impulse." "Play," he says,

“is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage, and at the same time typical of human life as a whole.” “Throughout the realm of childhood, play is the main spring of moral strength.” The perception behind this penetrating definition is that all life, all universal movement, is nothing but the play of the creative Spirit. Play has no end outside itself—it is its own delight, its own reward. Play and work are the same expression of the creative energy. There is no difference between them. Work should be done, not with any ulterior motive, but simply as a form of play, as a spontaneous outflow of the creative energy. It is only when work is done in this way, in the spirit of play, that it becomes really creative—it becomes a form of art. For, the secret of artistic creation is absence of ego and self-interest. Art is the prism of the beauty and bliss of God. The play of the child partakes something of the motiveless spontaneity of the divine Artist. Work is degraded into drudgery when it is drained of the spirit of play. Each child must be taught to work as it plays; to work as the universal Spirit works, with the inexhaustible joy and delight of play. This will be a very salutary training for the future life of the child. Life will not appear as a struggle or an ordeal, a stale duty or a boring monotony, but as a field for the joyous and spontaneous expression of the creative energies of developing manhood. The secret of success in work lies in the freedom of the worker from all attachment, and all craving for personal reward or recognition. He should work, because he must; because his energies need a natural outlet; because life is nothing but self-expression. He should work even as he breathes. But to be able to work thus, in the glad abandon of play, with the spontaneous joy and freedom and drive of the elemental forces, he must have integrated his whole being, and attuned it to the harmonious rhythms of the universal existence. To foster this spirit of work through the play of the child, and infuse it into its whole nature is to prepare its life for a natural flowering. A life of unimpeded spontaneity is a divine life. This conception of play is, to my mind, Froebel’s greatest contribution to education; and

if it is realised in the life of the students, it will go a long way in eradicating the evils of selfish competition and scramble for power with which modern life all over the world is so sorely afflicted.

Froebel was uncompromising in his insistence on freedom for the evolving soul of the child. The soul cannot develop on its own lines, if it is made a victim of the tyranny of the vapid conventions of society, the cramping influence of the environment, undue interferences from parental authority, and the uncanny hold of the religious creed of the family. Indeed, so very uncompromising was Froebel on the point of freedom that for some years the Prussian government suppressed kindergarten, scenting in it an unprecedented danger to its security. But by freedom Froebel did not mean licence, or absence of restrictions. Freedom is the delightful outcome of the rules and restrictions one imposes on oneself—it is a radiant blossom of self-discipline.

The individuality of the child, Froebel insisted, must be encouraged at any cost; for, paradoxical though it may sound, it is only through an unfettered growth of the individual that the unity of society and race can be best assured.

In Froebel's view, character depends on the "realisation of the oneness of all things with God". Character develops and reaches perfection in the child's free contact with others, in its selfless interchange with the life around it.

In Froebel there was a happy marriage between classicism and romanticism. He insisted on the order, harmony, peace, poise, and universality of outlook of classicism as much as on the freshness, originality, spontaneity, love of nature, and richness of emotions of romanticism. His kindergarten was meant to combine these two complementary strains of human nature, and evolve a harmonious perfection in the child.

The child is to be regarded, not so much as a product of the past or a mirror of the present, but as the hope and herald of the future—the divine spark it carries within it is the real creator and architect of what is to be. If the educator misses this truth of the child's budding personality, he misses altogether the mean-

ing and purpose of its life, and can only mislead it, and nip or pervert its possibilities. He alone can be the right educator who perceives the divine spark in the child and helps it to grow into a flame, and fulfil itself according to the plan and purpose of God.

Froebel's philosophy and method of education were met with cold incredulity. His vision and inspiration were too high to be appreciated by the materialistic mind of the West. His kindergarten system was almost universally adopted, but with the light and fire of its soul extinguished. A deep and far-sighted philosophy of education was again wrecked on the rocks of materialistic scepticism and myopic pragmtism.

THE KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL

Cornelius Boeke's Kindergarten School, known as *Work-plaats Kindergameenschap*, deserves a mention here, because a high idealism, a far-seeing faith, a noble courage of conviction, experience, and personal sacrifice have gone into its creation and organisation. Cornelius (Kees) Boeke and his wife, after a labour of decades, have built up a system which, but for the not unusual damage done by State interference, would have achieved something solid and enduring in the educational field.

Boeke's school is co-educational, and open to students of all classes and countries. It provides a balanced education in which both the mind and the body receive concurrent and adequate training. Those who are intellectually more evolved than the rest of the students have also to do manual work like digging and planting, or sweeping and cleaning the rooms, and learn to dance, sing and paint. The school is run practically by the students themselves, and even small children are given a chance to think over its management and lend a helping hand. The teachers are expected to act as benevolent watchers and counsellors rather than as leaders and task-masters. For, freedom, according to Boeke, is the most important principle in the education of children. "I tried", says he, "not to meddle with children, not to prevent

the growing forces from expanding, seeking rather to liberate them and help them to develop. In doing so I found that I was acting like a catalyser, taking no part in the process myself but enabling it to take place by just being there. So I discovered that there was something deeper than words, even deeper than actions, a sense in which just being and watching were the fundamental things in life."

Like Froebel, Boeke also believed that in every man there is a spirit, a real self, which should be the real focus and object of attention. Its free and unhindered blossoming is the sole end of education. What is essential is a batch of educators or teachers who must lead a life "*steeped in an ever-renewed contact with the Divine, and constantly nourished by quiet contemplation.*" One cannot help recalling in this connection the ancient ideal of education in India. It is, indeed, tragic that such high, creative ideals are greeted with cynical indifference in the West, and given the go-by without a moment's serious thought.

Among the methods outlined by Boeke, the following are most important :

- 1) A spontaneous interest should be evoked in the child for the subjects it learns, and there must be no impositions, and no rewards and punishments to induce interest.

- 2) There should be no separation of the sexes, and no division of education into primary, secondary and further grades.

- 3) Education should be creative, and each child must be encouraged to feel that the school is an extension of its home, and that it is its own responsibility to run it and promote its interests with the help of its teachers. Every child should be considered a worker, and every adult a helper. Barring a few minor points, on which, reserve my judgement, Boeke's philosophy and method of education are excellent, and could have gone far in reclaiming modern education. But they were ruthlessly mangled by the officious interference of the benevolent State, whose financial help the Kindergarten School could not long do without in the circumstances of its expanding economy.

Abandonment of individual methods of teaching, competitive examinations, cramming of lessons, curtailment of freedom etc. were the inevitable outcome of the State subsidy. A great hope was thus snuffed out with the same callous alacrity with which the uncomprehending State machinery always makes a hash of many a bright ideal and creative method.

THE MONTESSORI METHOD

Dr. Maria Montessori's contribution to pedagogy is immense and subtly pervasive. With her knowledge of science and medicine she combined a keen psychological insight and a great capacity for research and experiment. Stripping her mind of its preferences and predilections, she approached the subject of education in the true spirit of an explorer. "I did not start with one idea, for example, freedom; I started with no ideas." She watched small children for long stretches of time, and observed their spontaneous actions and reactions; and her searching gaze pierced through their surface behaviour into the subconscious and the unconscious, in which she discovered the hidden springs of human evolution, the creative élan, or the hormone of the psychologists. She studied the spontaneous manifestations of childhood, and allowed herself to be guided by them. "The things the children used constantly we retained; the things they ignored, we eliminated." Though influenced by Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Froebel, Montessori was wedded to no school of educational thought, but struck out her own path, and built her own system on the basis of her faith in certain spiritual values. "Whilst the hidden potentialities of Nature have been explored and exploited to their very utmost", she says, "the abyss of man's subconscious has not yet been scanned. Man, as a spiritual being, has been left to the mercy of outer circumstances and is on the way to becoming a destroyer of his own constructions."¹

¹ *The Formation of Man* by Montessori

She advocates a universal revolution in human thought and ways of living, which will make man "raise his values and become master, instead of the victim, of the environment he has himself created."¹ She felt the imperative need of a complete reconstruction of education, and was well aware that "reconstruction requires the elaboration of a 'science of the human spirit' ". She believed that there is "an inner energy which of its nature tends to manifest itself", but is stifled by the prejudices of society, and crippled by the hostility of the environment.

Environment is a very important factor in the Montessori system of education. It must be adapted to the developing life of the child. "The first environment is the world, and the other environments, such as the family and the school, must correspond to and satisfy those creative impulses which tend to realise human perfection following the guide of the cosmic laws."

The scientifically designed method of Montessori provides, along with environment and work, some apparatus, by means of which the inner teacher in the child can guide the child's growth and development through its experiences. "Much of Montessori's so-called formal apparatus is merely a set of concrete 'models' of... abstract ideas, and the existence of these models makes it easier for the child to do his abstracting at an earlier age and so to enter into language and use it correctly, at an earlier age. Not only do these things educate the senses; they have an even greater effect in clarifying the mind." So, the 'materialised abstraction'—Dr. Montessori's own phrase—is another of her major contributions to educational theory."² Montessori was rewarded with marvellous results by the application of her triple method of environment, work and apparatus. The easy and natural way in which small children learnt to read and write in an incredibly short time—Montessori describes it as an 'explosion into writing'—astounded many a veteran educationist

¹ *The Formation of Man* by Montessori

² *The Year Book of Education*, 1957

who came to test her method. One may not see eye to eye with Montessori in her ardent advocacy of teaching reading and writing, and even grammar to very small children ; but the fact of her getting astonishing results should stimulate further research into the subject. What most encouraged her to proceed on the lines she had chalked out was the subconscious and the unconscious of the child, which, according to her, have a wonderful capacity for absorption, assimilation and direction. In her system, the work of the teacher consists in aiding the absorbent mind of the child in imbibing what is conducive to its growth from the influences which stream in upon it from the world in which it is born and bred up, and to which it has to adapt itself.

According to Montessori, there are different periods in the growth of the child, and, therefore, there should be different ways of teaching, appropriate to the specific demands and necessities of those periods. There cannot be a set method of treatment for all stages of the growth of the child'¹

Montessori considers the first six years of the child's life as the most important. "Observation proves," she writes in her book, *Education for a New World*, "that small children are endowed with special psychic powers, and points to new ways of drawing them out—literally educating—by co-operating with nature." At one with Froebel and differing from Herder, Montessori does not consider the imparting of knowledge as the principal aim of education. The aim is, rather, to release the latent potentialities of the child, who is, in fact, the architect of man, and the moulder of society. Montessori speaks with fervid eloquence of "the riches that lie buried in the psychic world of the child—a treasure which has never been exploited, more precious than gold, the very soul of man." "Observation of the first two years of life has thrown new light on the laws of psychic construc-

¹ One is here reminded of Whitehead's rhythm of education and enumeration of three stages of mental growth : the stage of romance, the stage of precision, and the stage of generalisation.

tion, showing them in childhood completely different from the psychology of the adult. So, here begins the new path, wherein it will not be the professor who teaches the child, but the child who teaches the professor.”¹

According to Montessori, education is not what the teacher imparts to the student, but what the student himself acquires by his experiences on the environment. The work of the teacher is to provide a series of motives of cultural activity, “spread over a specially prepared environment”, and let the child develop through its own experiences. “Human teachers can only help the great work that is being done, as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of the New Man² who will not be the victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society.”³

But for this kind of teaching or guidance, there must be specially trained teachers, and so Montessori trained some teachers under her personal care. The training of the teachers is the first problem in education. Nothing but failure and frustration can be the result of those systems in which untrained and incompetent teachers are left to bungle with the education of children in the most formative period of their life.

Like Froebel, Montessori insists on the perfect freedom of the child, and considers discipline and obedience to be the natural fruit of freedom in a given environment, in which the creative impulses of the child find an uninterrupted fulfilment.

Montessori reminds us of Rousseau and Nietzsche when she says : “Nature, wise Nature, must be the basis on which a Supra-Nature,⁴ still more perfect, can be constructed. It is certain that progress must surpass Nature and adopt different forms

¹ *Education for a New World* by Montessori

² Cf. “Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man”—Vivekananda.

³ *Education for a New World* by Montessori

⁴ It is this Supernature that is the ultimate goal of the integral education, propounded by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

—it may not, however, proceed by trampling upon Nature.”¹

Montessori’s vision may not be as wide and deeply spiritual as Foebel’s, but it was intense and penetrating. Her psychological approach to education, her emphasis on the exploration of the subconscious and the unconscious of the child, and her scientific method of providing for the unimpeded direction of the inner guide in the child, are a solid contribution. She has brought into focus certain fundamental principles of education, the incalculable potentialities of the child, and the right way of bringing them out and leading them to realisation—an achievement, which is, indeed, a landmark in the history of Western pedagogy.

But her system fell a victim to the same tragic fate as had overtaken those of Pestalozzi and Froebel. The frigid apathy of the conservative public, the unwillingness of the educationists to be routed out of the snug complacency of the beaten track, and the strong seduction of materialistic science and technology barred the way of this ray of the new Light trying to pierce into the gloom of the present.

RISHABHCHAND

¹ *The Formation of Man* by Montessori

SRI AUROBINDO'S SAVITRI

THE EXORDIUM

"If seeds in the black earth can turn into such beautiful roses, what might not the heart of man become in its long journey towards the stars"?

G.K.CHESTERTON

SRI Aurobindo's chosen aim in life was to show earth-bound mortals the path that leads to the Life Divine. To illustrate this passage to the Earthly Paradise, he wrote his epic poem *Savitri*, a masterpiece of sustained philosophical motivation and steeped in mysticism and Yoga Sadhana. The well-known story of the young wife, Savitri, who saved her husband from an untimely death, thus scoring a victory over the seeming inexorability of Fate, is here swathed in the robes of Vedantic metaphysics and given a poetic reincarnation. *Savitri* thus evokes, not only the heroic girl-wife of immemorial legend, but also our Universal Mother who bears with infinite patience and immaculate strength the trials and tribulations of mortality and succeeds in the end in vouchsafing immortality to the children of the earth.

This ambrosial story is unfolded to the *sahridaya* through a succession of images and symbols. Sri Aurobindo's poem opens, as a literary epic usually does, on the crucial day that is to witness the central act of the epic. The past is mapped out in a sudden flash-back, the future will be summed up later. The present is what matters, and the poem is concerned with it.

Savitri, the princess of Madra and darling daughter of King Aswapathy, has married the exiled King Dumatsena's dear son, Satyavan. She is living in the forest with her husband and his

elders, sharing uncomplainingly their austere life. Between Savitri and Satyavan a true marriage of minds has been effected. Satyavan is blissfully happy; Savitri too, but her joy is marred by the uneasiness which has been caused by her knowing the approaching end—the fate of Satyavan—as warned by the celestial bard, Narad. Thus the young wife perforce leads a twofold existence, outwardly serving her elders and preserving an angelic calm, but inwardly dreading the Day and its ominous consequences; and the Day has now arrived.

The poem starts here : Night is fleeing and Dawn is approaching.

It was the hour before the Gods awake.¹

It is an arresting opening, instinct with immeasurable significance. This first canto evokes the 'symbol dawn' and dwells on its varied filiations with life and the spiral of Consciousness. The whole canto is so charged with mystic symbolism that, in a manner of speaking, it is dense and not easily penetrable. Such poetry makes its impact on us by sudden illuminations rather than by the dull steady light of a logical sequence of ideas. A vision is presented to us, and it slowly grows and expands its orbit. First there is the Night: it is pitch-dark, for generally the hour immediately preceding Dawn is the darkest of the hours of darkness. Yet through this dense night peep the rays of twilight. Presently Dawn envelops the world in a maze of hazy light, and darkness withdraws quiveringly, like the demoness Lankini leaving her guardianship of Lanka's gates with the approach of the Sun-like resplendent Hanuman. The process is simultaneous—light coming and darkness retreating and vanishing. And Dawn heralds the Day, even as Aruna heralds Surya.

This sublime picture of Dawn is verily infused with the symbolism of growth in Consciousness : that is, Woman inconscient waking up from her stupor and becoming slowly transformed into the superconscient Goddess. Sri Aurobindo's aim in retelling

¹ *Savitri*, p. 1. (The page-references are throughout to the standard edition of *Savitri* in Sri Aurobindo International University Centre Collection, published in 1954.)

the familiar story of Savitri is to show how the mind that at first partakes of the inconscience of the lowest depths or rungs of life, passes through successive stages of evolution, and at last attains the highest, the Superconscient. In the first canto itself Sri Aurobindo hints at these vistas of higher consciousness, leading man from the lowest to the topmost rung of the evolutionary ladder.

The key symbol is Dawn. It is preceded by Night which is both silent and grim —

Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse
The abyss of the unbodied Infinite.¹

There is a shower of diction evoking the deep, impenetrable, lethargic, sombre, incomprehensible night. Inconscient matter lies inert, like a coiled pythoness of a woman.

Its formless stupor without mind or life.²

But in this seemingly 'fathomless zero' lay nevertheless the germs of immortal life. The banian tree waxes immense through centuries in its majestic grandeur. But where lay its beginning? In the tiny seed planted in the womb of the nascent earth! Thus, for the life that ultimately attains the Superconscient, the germ still is the inert, unformed, inconscient matter.³ This germ stirs to induce the birth of life. The stir is very slight, gentle and almost imperceptible; it is a "nameless movement, an unthought idea." This movement is personified in a "long lone line of hesitating hue" that heralds the coming Dawn; bringing in her wake the Promise of the Supramental Age,

Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues.⁴

¹ *Savitri* p. 3.

² *ibid* p. 4

³ Cf Robert Bridges:

And since we observe in all existence four stages—Atomic, organic, sensuous, and self-conscient—and must conceive these in gradation, it was no flaw in Leibnitz to endow his monad-atoms with Mind. (*The Testament of Beauty*, Bk. I, II. 427-30.)

⁴ *ibid* p. 6.

Earth's children have risen, and they spring to their daily tasks. Savitri too has risen. But although she is in it, she is not of it. When people around her are immersed in their daily tasks, she goes about with her heart rendered numb by the coming ordeal. Her face is calm, and outwardly she is merely the stern daughter of Duty. But —

A dark foreknowledge separated her
From all of whom she was the star and stay;¹

In this young maiden, humanity places its hope for Life, and to accomplish this divine task of saving humanity,

Unhelped she must foresee and dread and dare.²

For Savitri knows that this Dawn is the long awaited morn that ushers in "the day when Satyavan must die."

So much for the coming of light and the gathering of consciousness out of night and unformed matter. In this first canto Sri Aurobindo uses a carefully balanced structure of symbols to demonstrate the emergence of knowledge from the amorphous matter of ignorance. Three women are introduced in this connection. The swarthy woman, Night; the efflorescent damsel, Dawn; and, mediating between them, Savitri, who is human as well as divine.

Night is like Lankini, the demon-deity of Ravana's Lanka. It is next to impossible to detect life in any form or cultivate consciousness of any kind in this unintelligible chaos. This woman clad in funereal robes is the denial of all hopes—or so it seems at first. The idea of supramental bliss is incongruous, in the context of this impenetrable veil of unfeeling, unintelligible matter. Where, then, is the hope for man—Earth's child—who yearns for the Life Divine, when what he faces is this

¹ *Savitri*, p. II.

² *ibid.*, p. II.

...shadow spinning through a soulless void¹ ?

But this dark mud nevertheless contains the sapling for tomorrow's fresh white lotus.

Presently Earth's child sees the gay dawn approaching, and most welcome is her approach. It is the goddess Usha who symbolizes the Superconscient. Man naturally wants to cast away the badges of temporal limitation that he has been wearing till now, and gather the life eternal that Usha symbolises. She comes bringing with her the "God-touch" that promises Fulfilment and intrepets

...a recondite beauty and bliss
In colour's hieroglyphs of mystic sense,
It wrote the lines of a significant myth
Telling of a greatness of spiritual dawns,²

Goddess Usha has come; the lotus has sprouted in the muddy pond; a sweet odour pervades the earth; early birds are chirping; the far East is presently glowing russet-hued; the wind is fresh and free. Thus the coming of Usha is very auspicious indeed for the mortal who aspires for immortality.

But all is not right with the world which wants to reach God in His Heaven, as it knows not the way. How will the ordinary mortal reach the dizzy heights of the soul's high mountains ? How will the sapling inside the mire blow forth a divine lotus ? Man is either depressed and rendered hopeless by the gaping mass of inconscient matter that is symbolized through the woman Night, or he is astonished and left helpless by the dazzle of the Superconscient symbolized by the goddess Usha. Is there no way for the ordinary mortal to cut through the coils of uncivilised demonaic dominations imposed by formless matter and embrace

¹ *Savitri*, p. 4.

² *ibid.*, p. 6.

the Life Divine of civilised angelic Brahma-Knowledge ? There is, says Sri Aurobindo, and paints in apt poetic hues the sufferings and successes of our Primordial Mother represented in the light-stepping slender-waisted damsel Savitri.

In the second canto, entitled 'The Issue', we see Savitri very near to the Mighty Issue between Death ignominious and Life Eternal. Only a few hours, and the issue will be joined between Yama and Savitri. This is the crucial moment in her life. To draw back and leave Fate to its devastating work is out of question. For, it is she in whom the Universal Mother has descended to save humanity from the blight of terrestrial bondage. To Savitri only one way is possible; that is, to go forward, to struggle, to dare Destiny, whatever the final outcome be. Sages have pronounced that Fate is inexorable; thus failure seems to be more likely than victory. Yet Savitri must issue forth, and not turn back the step planted forward. So Savitri, called by the peremptory summons of Duty and filled with bottomless compassion, stands on the threshold of the field of Fate, ready for the struggle. A short while from now, Death will claim Truth from Love; and it is no easy task to defeat Death and grasp Immortality. But Savitri does not give way to despair. Unperturbed, like a block of wood,¹ she strengthens herself and Her Self with in-drawn yogic concentration and secures through her sadhana the necessary strength from the Divine.

With the Mighty Doom just round the corner, Savitri falls into reverie, when the near past marches through her memory as a crystallized documentary. Dawn has come to the world; Savitri has risen and is following her daily round of duties as a housewife. While she is at these routine exertions,

Awhile, withdrawn in secret fields of thought,
Her mind moved in a many-imaged past²

¹ "*thistanthi chaiva Savitri kashtabhuteva lakshyate* : And Savitri, who was fasting looked (unperturbed) like a block of wood." (From 'Savitri Upakhyaṇa' in the Vana Parvan of the *Mahabharata*.)

² *Savitri*, p. 14.

Savitri's heart aches to think that such a threatened end should have been designed to such a happy life as hers has been. Her memories have not dimmed with the passage of time; on the other hand, in their complete wholeness they lie "mapped to her sun-clear recording view." She glances at her treasure-trove of memorable experiences where everything can be found as fresh as a morning flower—

From the bright country of her childhood's days
And the blue mountains of her soaring youth
And the paradise groves and peacock wings of Love
To joy clutched under the silent shadow of doom
In a last turn where heaven raced with hell.¹

In these five lines are succinctly reviewed the variegated turns of her whole life upto the present. The birth of Savitri, the child-princess, the blushing maiden young; the meeting of Satyavan and the birth of Love; the warning of Narad and the foreknowledge of relentless fate; marriage and the bitter-sweet year that followed it, and now the threatening Doom—everything has been condensed into an incandescent lyrical passage. Savitri's soul is choked as it were at the very thought of possible failure, which must mean Nothingness for ever. An intense emotional fever grips her heart and she determines to go on with the Struggle. She must win and save Truth; only then can the Supramental Age be ushered in by means of the union of Love and Truth. Man must ascend the peak of the Superconscient, and as Fr. D'Arcy says, "without struggle...the ascent of Man is almost impossible".² So this giant Hurdle is sprawled across the way leading ignorant mortal man to the gnostic immortal Divine. And Savitri has come to remove the obstacle whatever the hazard.

Savitri is here revealed to us, in this intrinsically dramatic

¹ *Savitri*, p. 14.

² *The Pain of this World and the Providence of God* by M. C. D'Arcy (1935)

situation, as being poised on the peak of perilous uncertainty. After twelve months of blissful married life she fronts the advancing Fate, a Fate which in itself also foreshadows the coming of a spiritual Dawn. Her mind is first torn between dark forebodings and radiant hopes. The clouds are gathering and look dully malicious. Will they send forth a lightning of divine hue or will they, after all, envelop the whole world in a thick blanket of Darkness ? Seized by the uncertainty of the Future, a deep oblivion falls upon her mind, obscuring it in dense dark night. Curiously enough this night actually forebodes good. For it is the dark dark hour before dawn, it is the poison preceding nectar.¹ And so too the spiritual aspirant must needs experience "the dark night of the soul" before participating in the "bliss of Brahman" (*Brahmananda*) :

An absolute supernatural darkness falls

On man sometimes when he draws near to God :²

It is Savitri's turn now—

That hour had fallen now on Savitri.³

The sweet, the agonised "remembrance of things past" is ended : Savitri is now on the threshold of the future. She is drawing near her eternal home, but she know not whither lies the path. As for the present, it is a complete void. Neither of the past nor of the future, it is in this present she must face her Task—

On the bare peak where Self is alone with Nought.⁴

Here she must wrap about her the armour of her yogic strength and

¹ The Puranic story is that when the *devas* (Gods) and the *asuras* (Demons) churned the ocean of milk, poison came first and then came nectar.

² *Savitri*, p. 15.

³ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 16.

...plead her case upon extinction's verge,
In the world's death-cave uphold life's helpless claim
And vindicate her right to be and love.¹

The Supreme Moment has drawn very near ; the twelve
months of passionate joy have fled by like

A mailed battalion marching to its doom,²
and,

The last long days went by with heavy tramp,³

The cast and sound of these lines suggest the relentlessnes
of Time's march, which seems to have a bulldozer heaviness and
irresistibility. It is as though the sergeant Time has given orders
for a forward march, and the days march without flinching or
haste, regardless of the hour that conceals within its womb the
poison of immitigable Death ; or, is it rather going to be the
Nectar of Eternal Life ?

The days have gone by too soon ; alas ! evanescent is earthly
joy and beauty. Now that fate has begun its chase, Savitri has
withdrawn into herself. About her silence reigns ; but silence,
when witnessed in her presence, is mystically eloquent. And
she stands here like a jewel of purest ray serene. The seeming
pity of it ; O the pity that such Sorrow must weigh upon so beauti-
ful and delicate a woman. Holy, fair, majestic and, above all,
womanly—

All in her pointed to a nobler kind.⁴

¹ *Savitri*, p. 16.

² *ibid.*, p. 16.

³ *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 18.

Hers was

A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity.¹

Every act of hers—walking, smiling, talking, working—was invested with the liquid purity of Heaven-born Grace.

For this mortal woman has immortality within her ; the human child is made of superhuman dimensions. She is of the earth, but not earthy ; she is of heaven, but is no featureless divinity. Rather is she

Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm
Overflow the ways of Thought to unborn things.²

It is in such a girl that the World-creatix, the World-saviour, is personified. Possessed of immense capabilities, Savitri is

An ocean of untrembling virgin fire.³

Although she is born human to save humanity, yet is she divine in her origins. The ray of divinity unfailingly issues forth through the framework of the mortal being. To this Divine Mother who walks the earth in a mortal garb is given the challenge to meet and master ; the issue thus presented to her is—

Whether to bear with Ignorance and Death
Or hew the ways of Immortality,
To win or lose the godlike game for man,⁴

But, then, she is not born to yield the field to Ignorance and Death.

¹ *Savitri.*, p. 18.

² *ibid.*, p. 18.

³ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 21.

(continued next page)

To lead, to deliver was her glorious part.¹

Hers is the task to unclasp the net that binds this "immense material world" which is really a gaol, and thus release humanity to the freedom of a tremendous spiritual heaven. To break mankind's fetters, "Her single will opposed the Cosmic rule." Savitri is determined to face the issue and strive her uttermost to "stay the wheels of Doom." She is confident in her power, although the issue's result is as yet uncertain. But success is not impossible to achieve. A clicking of the switch can set ablaze a building hung with innumerable bulbs. The first decisive push, the primal force, is what is needed. Once that is accomplished, the force will make instantaneous contacts and brighten a whole city, thus dispelling darkness and enveloping life with light. So also with this Major Issue.

A prayer, a master act, a king idea
Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force.....
One mighty deed can change the course of things ;
A lonely thought becomes omnipotent.²

Man is mortal no doubt ; made of flesh and blood, he has nothing permanent about him ; nor anything of superior merit in him—except his soul. The soul is deathless, is permanent. It is actually a spark spilt from the Starry Heavens of the Divine Realms. This the soul is the godhead that lodges behind the apparent brute machine. But it lies inert until it is stirred to life and sovereignty. The cobra raises its hood only when it is

Cf. Hamlet

To be, or not to be—that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them ?

¹ *Savitri*, p. 21.

² *ibid.*, p. 24.

provoked; to glimpse the beauty and majestic grandeur of a King Cobra, we have first to arouse it.¹ So also with the human soul. When it is prompted by a spiritual struggle it rises from the nescient unconscious state and draws itself to its full stature of Divinity. Faced with the mighty crisis of the challenge of Death claiming Satyavan (thereby smothering Truth itself) Savitri is called to action, and

The great World-Mother now in her arose.²

Armed with Righteousness, sustained by Hope, and spurred on by the call of Duty, Savitri like

A flaming warrior from the eternal peaks
Empowered to force the door denied and closed
Smote from Death's visage its dumb absolute
And burst the bounds of consciousness and Time.³

Such is the grand beginning of Sri Aurobindo's epic. The Dawn of the fated day has arrived, but the spiritual dawn for mankind is yet to come. Meanwhile our compassionate Mother has chosen to struggle with the Enemy. Fortifying herself with the nectarean past and the gains of her yoga, she is now ready to face Death and win back Truth, and rear in our midst a new heaven and a new earth.

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

¹ *jwalati calitendhanognirviprakruhaḥ phanagaḥ phaṇāṅkurute prāyaḥ swaṃ mahimānaṃ kṣobhat prati padyate hi janāḥ*

"The fire blazes when the fuel is stirred; the serpent, when provoked, expands its hood; for a man generally regains his proper greatness, under some provocation." (Matali in Kalidasa's *Shakuntalam*)

² *Savitri*, p. 25.

³ *ibid.*, p. 25.

THE LIFE DIVINE

(*An Outline*)

VOL. II

CHAPTER XXIII

MAN AND THE EVOLUTION

AN evolution of consciousness in Matter until the form can reveal the indwelling spirit is the central motive of the terrestrial existence. At first a veiled Inconscience hides the universal Consciousness-force which works within it, and the force of creation itself appears inconscient. But consciousness is slowly delivered, at first in unconscious forms of Matter, and then in the guise of living Matter. At first a rudimentary mentality, half subconscious, reaches intelligence in Man, the thinking and reasoning animal, who yet carries within him the downward pull of the original Inertia and Nescience. Mentality struggles towards knowledge but is hampered by the Ignorance. Yet mental man is impelled to struggle towards divine manhood. This is the passage from Ignorance to Knowledge.

This terrestrial evolutionary working has a double process. There is the physical evolution with birth as its machinery; and there is at the same time an invisible process of soul evolution with rebirth into ascending grades of consciousness. The first only means a cosmic evolution; it is the evolution of the individual that demands rebirth. Each life becomes a step in a greater progression of consciousness manifest in Matter.

But the evolution is still in the Ignorance and man's mind only half-evolved. He challenges the theory of evolution, and doubts whether man has the capacity to develop into a higher evolutionary being; or whether indeed the evolution can go any further and can bring forth a supramental being in this

ignorant earthly Nature. But there is another argument regarding the workings of Spirits that we have to consider.

Even though creation is a manifestation of the Timeless Eternal in seven grades of Consciousness, with rebirth as part of the terrestrial order, yet a spiritual evolution of the individual being is not inevitable. If each thing has the spiritual presence within it, there is no need of change or progress. The numberless variation is but an expression of Infinite Being. If there is creation it is for the delight of creation, and there is no need of an evolutionary movement directed towards ultimate perfection.

We see further that the principles of creation are permanent and unchanging. Each type remains and does not become other than itself; it seems to be limited and fixed by its own nature. If Matter, Life and Mind have been manifested, it does not follow that Supermind must necessarily be manifested. For Supermind belongs to the higher status of the Divine knowledge, and Mind to the world of Ignorance. Man is the summit of this ignorant creation and has reached the utmost consciousness he is capable of. Mind cannot go outside its own cycle so that there can be no real upward ascent into the Beyond. If the soul is to go beyond it must pass out of this cosmic existence, to some higher plane of being.

Even the scientific verification of evolution may not be a permanent truth, as scientific facts are themselves changing. Heredity on which Science builds its concept of life evolution is also a power for keeping the species unchanged. There is nothing to show that a type can go beyond,—as ape-kind into man, for example. There is no proof that Matter developed into Life, and Life-energy into Mind-energy; neither that vegetable developed into animal, nor inanimate matter into living organism. If at all the conditions of life can be shown to appear out of matter it may be by a rare coincidence.

How then did all these gradations come into existence? It might be that they were manifested by the Consciousness-Force in Matter, building its own significant forms and types.

Matter is composed of infinitesimals charged with an immense energy. These associate and form groups which compose sensible objects. Life also begins with infinitesimal forms, building up from units of cell, seed and gene into living organisms. A profuse variation of types is produced, but no evidence of evolution. Forces of heredity, physical forces, and even invisible life and psychological forces have all operated in developing types.

Man, the most complex living being, is one of these types. He is the highest in the earthly creation, but like the others he has his limits within which he can extend and develop. To exceed himself would be a contradiction of his self-law. He has to seek through mind the mastery of his environment; it would be impractical to look beyond. If a supramental being is to appear it must be an independent manifestation, the creation of a new pattern. But as yet there is no sign of this.

It seems then that a new type cannot develop out of present humanity. There must be some race or make of human being that has the essential elements of the superman in it which Nature may accomplish by detaching a few in humanity to become the foundation of this new pattern.

If there was indeed the evolution of man out of the animal then the animal kingdom must have sunk back into quiescence as soon as man appeared. We do not see, however, this stress in humanity. Man does not show any radical signs of progress—except in his knowledge of the physical world. At the most it may be a widening circular progress, but man today is not wiser than the ancient seers and thinkers, or more spiritual, or more superior in arts and crafts. There seems to be no way out of his present half-knowledge or of breaking the mental circle.

Rebirth is a potential means of a spiritual evolution, but in view of the ancient theories it is not certain that this is its significance. The old explanation of Karma and return for good or evil done, offers no suggestion of a progressive evolution.

Man seems to be the last stage of the evolution, and he has been given the power to reject the earth and embodied life, and seek some heaven or Nirvana. Escape seems to be the only way out of the cycle.

But this view is not complete or conclusive. There are however two cogent objections to a pre-determined evolution from inconscience to superconscience. First a scientific reasoning that assumes all to be the work of an inconscient Energy that acts automatically and can have no purpose, and secondly a metaphysical reasoning that the Infinite and universal has everything in it and cannot add to itself, and so there can be no idea of emergent purpose.

If there is a secret Consciousness behind the inconscient Energy then the scientific objection cannot hold. For we might say that the urge to develop consciousness out of apparent Inconscience is the expression of the will of a secret Conscious Being. The element of purpose is here translated into terms of self-effective Will-Power of Truth of Being which would be the fundamental fact of the evolution.

For the metaphysical objection, it seems that the Absolute can have no purpose in manifestation except for the delight of unfolding. A universal totality may not have anything to gain but the material world is not an integral totality ; it may admit powers that are yet involved within matter, as well as descent of powers from the higher gradations. A manifestation of the greater powers in the material world may then be the final purpose. This teleology only proposes the realisation of the totality in the part. All is no doubt the divine Play but it is a play with an object to accomplish. Together with Ananda there is Truth and a force or Will to express that.

A theory of spiritual evolution must be valid apart from the scientific theory, which is only concerned with the outward process. Its account may have to be changed in the light of new discoveries. This evolution shows that there is a progressively complex organisation of matter, life and consciousness in living

matter. The facts of this hypothesis appear indisputable. There is the fact of a successive creation ; first Matter, then Life in Matter, then Mind in living Matter culminating in the human evolution. The order seems to be that the less developed precede the more developed and prepare for them.

In ancient Indian thought there is also the idea that the animal preceded man in time succession. In the Puranas it is stated that the tamasic animal creation was the first in time ; where tamasic represented the dull and sluggish consciousness. The more developed human consciousness has a greater force of kinetic mind-energy. The Tantra also speaks of the fallen soul passing through innumerable births in plant and animal forms to the human level before it can be ready for salvation. Here ascent culminates in the development of the conscious being who is capable of the spiritual motive and issue out of mentality, life and physicality.

What then is man's origin and status in this evolution ? Either there was a sudden appearance of a human body and consciousness, or else there was an evolution of humanity out of animal being. The latter theory offers no difficulty, since changes in type could be brought about by the conscious Energy in Nature, when the necessary conditions for change from animal to human were ready. The new type could thus develop, with its human intelligence, the subtler powers of reason, reflection, observation, and invention. The animal already possessed some rudimentary faculties which man could enlarge and develop on a higher mental level. The chief change was the power of the human mind to work upon itself and things, to create, know and speculate. Such reversal is characteristic in the radical transitions of Nature. Just as the life-force imposed its operations on Matter, and the life-mind emerged in the life-force, so the emergence of humanity could come by the application of the same principle.

This theory is easy to accept, but the emergence of the human out of the concealed Consciousness of the involution is

more difficult to accept, unless there is a material form already existent for this emergence to come into effect. If, on the other hand, there had been a descent from a mind plane above, the difficulty would be the appearance of a human body, unless it was an act of a supraphysical Force and creator. Yet we see that the action though secret must have been superimposed on an already realised physical basis and acting by an extension of some established process of Nature. It is more likely that some existing body open to a supraphysical influx was transformed ; or there may have been a pre-existent body sufficiently evolved for the reception of the mental influx. It is quite conceivable that both an evolution from below and a descent from above co-operated in the appearance of humanity. This would mean a process of evolution with the higher plane intervening to assist the new principle.

It is admissible that once each type of consciousness is established in the body it will be faithful to the law of its own nature. We see that the impulse towards self-exceeding is part of the law of the human type, so that although man has acted within the circle of his nature and given the appearance of lack of progress, yet there has been an increasing development of knowledge and possibility in man's achievements in all spheres of his endeavour. In spite of temporary descents the progress has been carried to the point when he is ready for the reversal of consciousness. If the next step is the supramental being, this is apparent in the stress of spirituality and the appearance of the spiritual man.

It may be suggested that only a few evolved human beings will form the new type and the rest will sink back from spiritual aspiration, which is no longer necessary for Nature's purpose. But it is reasonable to suppose that the human gradation is necessary in order that the ascent of the soul by reincarnation through the evolutionary degrees may continue. Although the whole human race would not rise in a block to the supramental level, the capacity in human mentality would press towards a

higher plane of consciousness. The change of consciousness will be the initial factor, the physical modification will be a consequence. The transmutation will remain possible to the human while the psychic being is potent and the nature is ready. The spiritual aspiration in man springs from his awareness of imperfection and limitation; and although the human mental status will always be there but it will be a step towards the supramental status.

The appearance of human mind and body was a crucial step in the evolution. Until then evolution had been effected subconsciously or subliminally by the automatic operation of Nature. Only in man the being has become aware of himself, and Mind has the will to develop and grow in knowledge. Man realises that there is a higher status of consciousness than his own; he has become conscious of a soul, and discovered the self and spirit. In man's aspiration is the sign of Nature's will for the emergence of a greater status.

In previous stages Nature's first care was to change the physical organisation. But in man a reversal is possible. Through the transmutation of his consciousness and not through a new bodily organism can the evolution be first effected. The changed consciousness itself will then operate whatever change is needed for the body. Man shows already the capacity to aid Nature in creating new types of plants and animals; so he can aid Nature consciously in his own spiritual and physical evolution.

Even from the surface evolution of consciousness in the physical birth we can arrive at these conclusions. There is also to take into account rebirth, the progress of the soul by ascent from lower to higher types. In this progression the psychic entity has been obscured by his life, mind and body and unable to manifest fully. But in man the psychic can develop more rapidly, and can eventually become the master of its instrumentation in Nature. Its emergence will mean the demand for a more spiritual existence. This can be effected by a change of consciousness from a foundation in Ignorance to a founda-

tion in Knowledge, which means a supramental instrumentation in Nature.

We cannot say that because this is a world of ignorance, such a transformation can only take place on a plane above the earth, or by merging of the soul in the Absolute, only if Ignorance is the sole meaning of the world-manifestation would this be valid. But Ignorance is only a portion of the World-Nature; it is not the original power. In its lower origin it is suppressed Consciousness labouring to recover itself. In the universal mind there are ranges above our mentality which are instruments of the cosmic truth-cognition; and to these the mental being can rise; for he already receives from them. The highest of these is directly open to Supermind. It seems inevitable that these higher powers of Existence should manifest here in Mind.

The inner drive of the spirit urges man towards the next step of manifestation. Although the spiritual urge has turned away from life, this is only one side of its tendency. Rejection of the lower instruments made him freer to realise the Truth. But the aspiration for a mutation of Nature, the divinisation of the lower instruments, is also there. He dreams of a divine descent upon earth; and it strongly indicates the urge of the spiritual being to emerge in earth-nature.

If a spiritual unfolding in Matter with the evolution of consciousness is the hidden truth of our earthly life, then man is not the last term of the evolution. Mind is only a middle term of consciousness, and the mental being only a transitional being. If man is incapable of exceeding mentality, he must be surpassed by superman who will take the lead in the evolution. But if mind is capable of opening, man can arrive at supermanhood, or at least participate in its advent on earth.

N. PEARSON

REVIEWS

I

The Indian Heritage by *Dr. V. Raghavan*. Pub. Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore 4. Pages 561. Price Rs. 13.00.

Sponsored by the UNESCO this anthology of Sanskrit literature faithfully mirrors the noble culture of India that is enshrined in this ancient language. Compiled and translated into English by Dr. Raghavan who has a wide reputation for his work in Sanskrit studies, it has certain special features which make it unique among similar efforts in the field.

In his informative Introduction, the editor gives a rapid survey of the growth of Sanskrit language and the vast scope of its literature stretching from the Vedas to the Puranas and Tantras. Speaking of Sanskrit, he quotes the observation of Sir William Jones that it is a language 'of wonderful structure ; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either.' He marks out three stages in the development of the language, the Vedic, the Epic and the Classic : "The Vedic Sanskrit, which was characterised by a pitch accent, was rich in both dialectical and grammatical forms ; the Epic language was easier and closer to the spoken tongue ; out of these, by a process of selection and standardisation, was evolved the classical idiom called *samskrita*, meaning the 'refined' language." In the literature that was produced in this language over a course of at least four thousand years (as also in what came to be written in the derived languages—the vernaculars), there is no distinction of the religious and the secular. All is infused with the breath of a spiritual Aspiration and Ideal characteristic of the Indian Soul. And this is the note struck by the motto chosen, appropriately, for the anthology :

“Behold, It is the breath of this great Being,—this Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda, Itihasa, Purana, the secret exercises, the secret doctrines, the verses, the aphorisms, the exegetical and recommentary texts, all these are the breath of this Being only.” (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, II.iv.10) As the Vishnu Purana puts it more simply :

“Poetry and all literary creations, as also all music, are but aspects of the Lord in His form as sound.” (I.22.84)

The volume begins, naturally, with selections from the Rig Veda, the oldest extant scripture of the world.¹ There have been differences of opinion regarding the probable date of the Veda. We agree with Dr. Raghavan that these hymns can easily claim an antiquity of at least a few millenniums before Christ. Apart from internal evidence with reference to seers ancient, *pūrva*, and seers modern, *nūtana*, there is a good deal of archaeological evidence to which the editor draws attention. He writes :

“Discoveries at Boghazkoi in Asia Minor show that the Vedas were earlier than 1400 B.C. ; in the clay tablets discovered at that place, the Vedic gods Mitra², Varuna, Indra and Nasatyau are mentioned in the treaties concluded between the Hittite and Mitanni Kings. The phonetics of these names as well as the numerals mentioned in a Hittite text on chariot-racing describing horses in language very akin to Sanskrit,...among the Kassites who ruled over Babylonia in 1746 to 1180 B.C. names of princes have been found which are Sanskritic.”

The hymns translated here from the Rig, Yajus and Atharva Samhitas are chosen with a view to emphasise the all-inclusive character of the Veda which took the whole of life into its folds. The seers of the Veda attach a definite significance to

¹ “They far outshine any literary remains of antiquity surviving in ceneiform or hieroglyphic, in clay tablets or papyrus, in Asia Minor or Egypt.” (P. xxiv)

² “The fleet-winged sun-disc which the Veda describes as Suparna, Garutman and Tarkshya Arishtanemi was the very emblem hovering over the head of the Hittite kings.” (P. xxiv)

‘The Vast Earth, whom the gods, without sleep or neglect,
guard always’¹

and to life here on Earth, each part of it being invested by them with a deeper significance as exemplified by the variety of hymns cited in these pages. They have a tender feeling for human emotions and it takes beautiful expression :

‘Bounteous Indra ! Endow this bride with excellent sons and fortune ; give her ten sons and make her husband the eleventh.’²

On page 31, Stambha should read Skambha ; obviously a printing error.

Next, there is an important section on the Brahmanas. It is usual in most anthologies to lightly pass over this literature as simply dry ritualism and hence of no special importance to posterity. Dr. Raghavan, we are happy to note, has made a departure. The “urge and spirit of enquiry”, he writes, “which culminated in the discovery of the one ultimate Truth, the Brahman, had its beginnings in the Brahmanas ; it is in the Brahmanas that one first meets with that higher and esoteric sense in which the different aspects of sacrifice and ritual were understood in the Upanishads so as to render them useful as meditative exercises (*vidyās*) ; in the Upanishads one finds often that things are understood on three planes, the sacrificial or the divine (*adhiyajña* or *adhidaiva*), the natural (*adhibhūta*) and the subjective (*adhyātma*) ; this threefold interpretation again originated in the Brahmanas and the subjective turn (*adhyātma*) that the Brahmanas thus gave was responsible for the further investigations into the nature of the inner Self (*ātman*) and the birth of philosophy which came to be called *adhyātma-vidyā*. If the Upanishads regularly use the concept of ‘devas’ (gods) as meaning

¹ Atharva XII. 1

² Rigveda X. 71. 45. The translator adds a note : ‘The idea is that the husband should always be attended to with love and care as if he were the youngest child.’

the senses, presided over by their respective deities, it was the Brahmanas which inaugurated this esoteric interpretation."

The Brahmanas along with the Upanishads, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, form a powerful movement of revival of the spiritual tradition of the Veda after a long period of decline. The Brahmanas concentrate upon the formal or ceremonial character of the Vedic system—though they have their highly philosophical passages, even as the Upanishads devoted to the recovery and development of the inner, the psychological aspect of the Teaching, do have their ritualistic portions. But there is in the Brahmanas a sustained effort to expound and justify the esoteric or spiritual significance of the various rituals. And many of the obscure passages in the Upanishads become clear only in the light of this exposition of the Brahmanas.

To quote some of the significant passages :

Faith wraps the gods ; Faith wraps this entire universe.¹

With eight courts around the nine gates is this unassailable city of gods (the body) ; in it is a golden treasury ; that is the heavenly region, wrapt in light ; whoever known this city of the Brahman, wrapt in immortality, to him the Brahman, as well as Brahma the Creator, grant life...This invincible golden city, glowing like gold and wrapt in the glory, the Creator has entered.²

It is not generally known that there are hymns to the Divine Mother in the Brahmanas too :

HYMN TO DURGA

That Goddess who is like fire and blazes forth with Her power, the creative power of the self-luminous Lord, sought by devotees for the fruits of their actions, that Goddess, difficult of access (*durgā*), I seek as my refuge ; to you, O

¹ Krishna Yajurveda : Taittiriya Brahmana II. viii. 88

² do. Taittiriya Aranyaka I. 27

Godless, who are the safe barque for people to cross easily,
I make obeisance.¹

In the Section on the Upanishads in which selections from the eleven major texts are given, Dr. Raghavan adds interesting notes underlining the passages which have had repercussions in the Western world of letters. For instance, he points out that the episode of the Gods and the Daemon in Kena (III) has been freely rendered by Victor Hugo in his poem SUPREMACY (in the *Legend of the ages*.)

Similarly, Emerson's poem BRAHMAN is a rendering of the Katha text (I.2.19): 'If the slayer thinks of slaying, and the victim thinks he is slain, both know not; this (Self) neither kills nor is killed.';

What the Thunder said by T.S. Eliot (in his *The Waste Land*) is based upon the Brihadaranyaka text (V.2.3): 'This is what this heavenly voice, the thunder goes on saying, DA, DA, DA —Be subdued, Give, Be compassionate';

so also, the phrase *kṣurasya dhārā*, sharp razor's edge, in Katha I.3.14, has supplied the title to a novel of Somerset Maugham.

The translator draws attention to the four *Mahāvākyas*, Great Affirmations of Brahman, in the Upanishads; each of the four Vedas has a Mahavakya in one of the Upanishads belonging to it. Thus:

Prajñānam Brahma, Knowledge is Brahman (Aitareya Up. III.3), is the Mahavakya of the Rigveda;

Tat tvam asi, That Thou Art (Chhandogya Up. VI.8.7) of the Samaveda;

Aham Brahma asmi, I Am Brahman (Brihadaranyaka Up. I.4.10) of Yajurveda;

Ayam ātmā Brahma, This Self Is Brahman (Mandukya Up. I.2) of the Atharvaveda.

¹ Taittiriya Aranyaka X. I.

Writing on the growth and significance of the Puranas, Dr. Raghavan makes some instructive remarks which place certain aspects of the Indian tradition in the proper focus:

“Most of the Puranas embody material bearing on this subject of Kshetra (Holy Spot) and Tirtha (Holy Waters), and the Skanda Purana may be singled out in this connection...some of the great Chola temples were envisaged by their authors, the teachers and the royal builders together, as concrete embodiments of spiritual truths ; two examples will suffice to illustrate the inner significance of what might be thought of as a negligible part of Hindu literature : the stories relating to Chidambaram, the shrine of Nataraja, and Tiruvarur, the shrine of Tyagaraja, both in South India. The former represents the doctrine of a dry, soulless routine of sacrificial ritual yielding to the overpowering influence of divine personality and the philosophy of the Lord engaged in his eternal dance of creation, maintenance, destruction, bondage and deliverance, on the cosmic stage ; the macrocosmic dance on the vast stage of the firmament has its counterpart in the microcosm, in the heart of the individual, the smaller ether, the miniature stage, the *dabhra*, *dahra* or *dahara ākāśa* of the Taittiriya Aranyaka and the Upanishads ; thus Chidambaram is Dahara Vidya in symbolic presentation. No less inspiring is the symbology of Tiruvarur and God Tyagaraja which represents a spiritual Vidya called *Ajapā* or *Hamsa Mantra*, in which the soul (*ātman* of the individual is seen in the eternal rhythm of life, swaying or dancing in the very process of breathing in and out, the concomitant subtle sound of ‘(A)ham sa’ signifying the Upanishadic affirmation, ‘I am That’.”

Selections from the Dharma Shastras of Apastambha and Gautama, the Smritis of Manu and Yajnavalkya are followed by practically the whole of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. The major part of the volume is devoted to the Epics : there are abridged versions of both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (the Bhagavad Gita included). The Bhagavata Purana is also given in a condensed form with its important portions singled out. To

quote only one useful passage :

“Uddhava asked the Lord how he should practise contemplation (*dhyāna*) and the Lord gave his detailed direction : ‘Sit evenly erect, at ease, with palms folded on the lap, with eyes fixed on the nose ; cleanse your lungs by taking a deep breath, holding it in and then discharging it, raise in your heart the OM sounding like the tolling of a bell, and in the lotus of your heart, contemplate My form as encircled by light’ ”(XI).

The editor draws pointed attention to *Bharata Savitri*, the Gayatri of Mahabharata, which is as apposite to the conditions of today as it was during the fateful days of Vyasa :

“With uplifted hands I shout ; alas ! none listens !
From observance of righteousness (*Dharma*) other ends of human pursuit like wealth and pleasure come ; then why is this righteousness not followed ? Not for any desire, not out of any fear, not out of avarice, not even for the sake of one’s life should one forsake Dharma.”

The anthology closes with specimens of a large variety of *stotra*, prayer literature (including the Vishnu Sahasranama from the Mahabharata), devoted to the different formulations of the Supreme Godhead as experienced and celebrated in the history of Indian Religion.

We have enjoyed reading this book which is easily the best of its kind, considering its objective and its price-range. And we would warmly commend it to all those who are interested in Indian culture and tradition but are not sufficiently acquainted with Sanskrit to study the source works in the original. Unlike the translations in most anthologies which lean heavily on the past labours of Western Indologists, the present rendering is an independent attempt and seeks to be faithful both to the letter and the spirit of the texts in Sanskrit and hence reliable.

M. P. PANDIT

Disjecta Membra by *Rajaratna S. V. Mukerjea*. Publishers : The Indian Institute of World Culture, 6, North Public Square Road, Bangalore 4. Price : Rs. 13.

“Fragments, scattered remains”—that is what *Disjecta Membra* means. The Latin phrase is meant to hit off the miscellaneousness of the studies collected here from various times and places of the writer’s life. But the impression which the *ensemble* gives is of a single consistent mind, a many-faceted unity : what would be hit off by the Latin phrase—*totus, teres atque rotundus*, “complete, smooth and round”.

Everywhere in the diversity of subject and treatment in the 334 pages before us we meet with a culture lightly carried. Rajaratna Mukerjea writes with an effortless elegance, keyed to popular appeal, out of a life enriched both by leisurely hours in the library and by crowded days amidst the hum of the world’s work. And there is a wideness of range that is rare indeed. He is almost equally at ease in, for example, “Marathi Literature and Its Present Needs”, “Bengali Literature and Linguistic Rivalry”, “Notes on Assamese Literary Developments”, “English Poetry in the Eighteen-Nineties and After”, “Chesterton’s Humour”, “Sartre as an Artist”, “Feminism and Indian Reform”, “Problems of Fertility : A Census Study”, “The Government Servant and the Public”. An explanation of so versatile a pen may be sought in some biographical facts : schooling in different places, finishing in Calcutta at the St. Xavier’s, under the discipline of the Jesuit Fathers—College, first in Calcutta, later in Oxford and London—service for nearly forty years in Gujarat, Kutch, Central India, and as far east as Tripura—travel in all parts of India and in many countries of Europe.

No doubt, one cannot say that the author plumbs all his subjects to the full or utters on each occasion the last word. Some of the essays are less detailed, less deep-plunging than others. In

several, the surface alone has been finely covered, but even there the sense of the profundities is not quite absent : although the author may not draw upon them he has hints of their presence and what he writes may serve to point us to explorations on our own. In a few fields he is evidently an amateur : one does not feel that he has grappled with acute philosophical problems or gone through any marked spiritual crisis. He speaks of Platonism and Existentialism and we enjoy reading him, but we have hardly the impression that they have struck at anything in him beyond the cultured mind. And one is a little surprised at the casualness of the two brief references to Sri Aurobindo—references that bespeak admiration yet no living exploring touch on either the literary or the philosophico-spiritual significance of the Aurobindonian achievement. But these few shortcomings do not lessen our pleasure in the presentation of all that in literature or life has mattered much to Mukerjea. One notes with especial appreciation his own particular relish of the eighteen-nineties in England, the period of the Aesthetic Movement which some have dubbed Decadence but which he well defends for its liveliness of temperament and its loveliness of language. He shows excellent insight when he says of that decade : “More properly, it should be called an age of preparation for a new creative epoch.” The insight is born of a genuine response, both aesthetic and psychological, to the work of Walter Pater. Mukerjea is a passionate Paterian and his very style carries something of the “perfume”—to use a favourite word of his—of Pater’s sensitive colourful soul, at once suave and scintillant.

We may pick out a few points from the book—original observations or illuminating reflections. What can be more delightfully Paterian than the suggestive reference to the element of Perso-Arabic culture in the life of medieval Bengal : “Here the blue domes of Isfahan with their magic moonlight of unceasing dalliance mingled with the hard glitter of Arabia’s league on league of echoing sand” ? Worth quoting is also the characterisation of Sarojini Naidu’s poetic art : “She never takes a landscape or

attempts panoramic effects, but just selects delicate little scenes, concentrating upon the picturesque effect of one or two selected colours at a time and attuning them to some governing mood of the mind or to some allusive human interest, chosen either from the thronging material of the life that surges around her, or from 'the memoried dusk' of time." Or take for its unerring touch the statement in the course of a general discussion of Indian literary trends : "It is just this transforming, uplifting mood that should be India's special contribution to the literature of the future." And interesting is the idea that the Drama is the literary form most suitable for the "new enthusiasm for humanity" that "has come over the world." According to Mukerjea, the future of the world's literature belongs centrally to the Drama—not the realistic theatre, the theatre of Ibsen, but what Fiona McLeod calls "the Psychic Drama" in which, as that Irish playwright says, "the emotional energy shall be along the nerves of the spirit, which comes beneath, and above and beyond, rather than merely along the nerves of material life which sees that only which is in the line of sight." It is a bit of a pity, though, that Mukerjea should identify the motive-force of the Psychic Drama with merely "a gospel of service", a work of reform and regeneration of the mind in an ethico-social sense. The true Psyche, the real Soul, is a focus of the Divine, the Infinite, the Eternal : to create and display character acting in its light would be the Psychic Drama properly speaking and in accord with India's inmost genius. Mukerjea misses this genius in its explicit form, yet the natural refinement of his temper cannot help feeling its way indirectly towards it. And his tendency, inexplicit here, may be seen in his own reading, however generalised, of what remains inexplicit in all that mixture of nausea and anguish and "bounding leap" towards freedom which goes by the name of Existentialism *à la* Sartre. In Mukerjea's eyes, the plays and novels of Sartre hold, for all their atheistic appearance, an unacknowledged sense of a super-being.

Sartre is not the only French writer whom he enjoys com-

menting on. We have also an essay on André Gide, with some shrewd touches of appreciation like : "Into the majesty of French Literature, he introduced the personalized novel. He brought to French prose a lyrical quality, which in such a work as *Les Nourritures Terrestres* was akin to exalted poetry." The essay carries, among other good things, a very telling paragraph on Gide's initial enthusiasm for and ultimate disappointment with the Soviet experiment.

Perhaps the two most satisfying pieces in the collection—pieces against which the charge of a brilliant sketchiness that may be levelled at some places in the book is least tenable—are : "Indian Literature : What of the Future ?" and "English Poetry in the Eighteen-Nineties". But even where a certain sketchiness is found, there is seldom a slip-up : the author's careful culture is sufficient to avoid it. Only in one or two small points there is some matter for doubt and in just one a clear inaccuracy. The inaccuracy comes in where he says that Swinburne "took the heroic couplet of Butler's *Hudibras* and turned it into a beautifully delicate instrument, palpitating, intense, as in his *Tristram of Lyonesse*..." Butler's *Hudibras* is not heroic but mock-heroic and burlesque and it is in couplets of four-foot lines (tetrameters) whereas Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* has five-foot lines (pentameters) in couplets that are lyrical in quality. The two poetic forms juxtaposed are really incommensurable.

We have dwelt on Mukerjea's varied literary and artistic interests. But the section entitled "Political and Personal" makes as good reading for the general public as the other two called "Some Currents in Indian Literature" and "Essays on European Thought". Much sound sense is here, and the very last piece—"Memorable Moments of My Life as an Administrator"—gives admirable glimpses of autobiography, showing a personality capable of humour and sympathy and tact, mostly exercised in the service of Sayajirao of Baroda with whom Sri Aurobindo also had worked a few years before Mukerjea's time.

Disjecta Membra is very well got up : the paper is excellent

and the printing is a pleasure to the eye and, for a book published in India, the proof-reading is far above the average, there being practically no errata.

K.D.S.

(3)

PICTORIAL HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY by *D. D. Runes*. Pub. Philosophical Library, Inc., New York 16. Price 15 Dollars.

It would be perhaps more appropriate to call this lavishly produced volume a pictorial history of Philosophers rather than of Philosophy. It contains nearly a thousand portraits, photographs, facsimiles, archaeological illustrations relating to the lives and times of many eminent men who have influenced human thought. Of Philosophy as such there is very little. And even of philosophers it is mostly of those from the West. It is a besetting sin of most of the anthologies and other works on the subject by Western writers that for them the innumerable systems of philosophy in the East simply do not exist. If at all they are taken note of, it is by courtesy ; they are passed over perfunctorily in a few pages. And this book is no exception. Of the 400 pages of the volume, Europe claims 278 pages, America 43, Judaism 45, Islam 8, India 15, China 8. And even those few pages, we are sorry to note, are full of mistakes. We looked up the section on Indian Thought with interest but are disappointed.

On the very first page of the Section there is a picture of 'Widow burning', obviously setting the right pitch for the 'proper' evaluation of Indian Philosophy whose "manner of metaphysical speculation", we are told, "has been never yet standardised". One would have thought that the stylised precision, brevity and terse expression of the Sutras was a special feature of Indian writing ; so too the severe dialectics which came to characterise the expositions of different standpoints in Indian Philosophy. But we shall not pursue the matter further. We are concerned

to draw the attention of the editor and unwary readers to some of the factual errors that abound in those few pages :

1. *The outstanding Vedic commentator was Shankara.* (P.46)

An inordinately large number of works is usually ascribed to Shankara ; to our knowledge there is no mention anywhere of the Acharya having written any commentary on the Veda. Perhaps the editor had Shankara's exegesis of the Vedanta in mind ; but that is quite another realm of thought and experience.

2. *Buddha renounced his fortune after enlightenment.* (P.47)

He had left his home and kingdom long before he attained illumination. In fact his spiritual quest started with this renunciation.

3. Caption for a photograph :

Jagadguru Sri Shankaracharya Bharati Krishna of Gowardhan Monastery in Puri, Ecclesiastical Head of most of Contemporary Hindu India and Apostolic Successor of the First Shankaracharya.

We have no doubt that the worthy head of the Puri Muth world be the first to protest against this kind of misleading magniloquence about his position. The Gowardhan Pitha is one of the four Muths established by Acharya Shahnara in four different quarters of the country—Badrinath in the north, Puri in the east, Sringeri in the south and Dwarka in the west—presided over by four different pontiffs. There is no one apostolic successor as such to the Adi Shankara. Each Muth has its following in the region traditionally covered by it, though the influence exercised by the heads of these Centres depends ultimately upon their own inner calibre.

4. *Sri Ramakrishna, the most influential of modern thinkers of India, founded numerous Vedanta Study Societies in the West.* (P. 57)

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa did nothing of the kind. It was his disciple Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna Order founded by him that have opened the said centres of Vedanta all over the world.

5. *Vivekananda, Swami, educated abroad.* (P. 58)

Vivekananda received his formal education in Calcutta, India. This 'Lion of Vedanta', as he was called, went to the West not to study but to teach the Wisdom of the East.

6. *Sri Aurobindo spent "three years in Baroda in various administrative and teaching capacities".* (P. 59)

He was in Baroda for a period of fourteen years.

(There is not a word about his Philosophy and Teaching. Perhaps it is just as well.)

It would be a pity if the other sections also are marred by such careless and erroneous presentation. One is not encouraged to look into them too closely. We have read the Introduction and, we are afraid, it places a heavy handicap on the whole work. "Philosophy," writes Dr. Runes, "is ethics, or it is nothing at all." We have always understood Philosophy to mean an intellectual presentation of one's Knowledge of the Reality, arrived at by whatever means. Ethics could only form one of the values in Philosophy, never its whole.

The unnecessary and misconceived,—to put it mildly—political digression in the Introduction is wholly out of tune with the spirit of any philosophy, ethical or religious or spiritual.

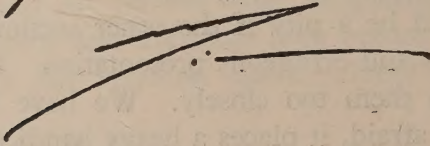
On page x, '*demon* within their soul' should read *daemon*'. We suppose even American spelling has got to be cautious at times if the sense of the word is not to be travestied.

M.P.P



*Faithfulness is the sure basis
of success.*

12.4.59



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